reverse

# L

旅立ちの聖職者（クラウン）

ディー・グレイマン

# D.Gray-man

HOSHINO 星野桂 KATSURA
KIZAKI 城崎火也 KAYA

【小説】JUMP j BOOKS

D.Gray-man reverse
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星野桂
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集英社




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星野　桂

HOSHINO KATSURA

BORN IN 1980. FROM SHIGA PREFECTURE. DEBUTED WITH "CONTINUE" IN WEEKLY SHOUNEN JUMP ISSUE 34, YEAR 2003. CURRENTLY WORKING ON "D.GRAY-MAN," WHICH HAS BECOME AN EXTREMELY POPULAR SERIES EVER SINCE WEEKLY SHOUNEN JUMP ISSUE 27, YEAR 2004. REALLY ATTACHED TO PET CAT, KORO.



城崎　火也

KIZAKI KAYA

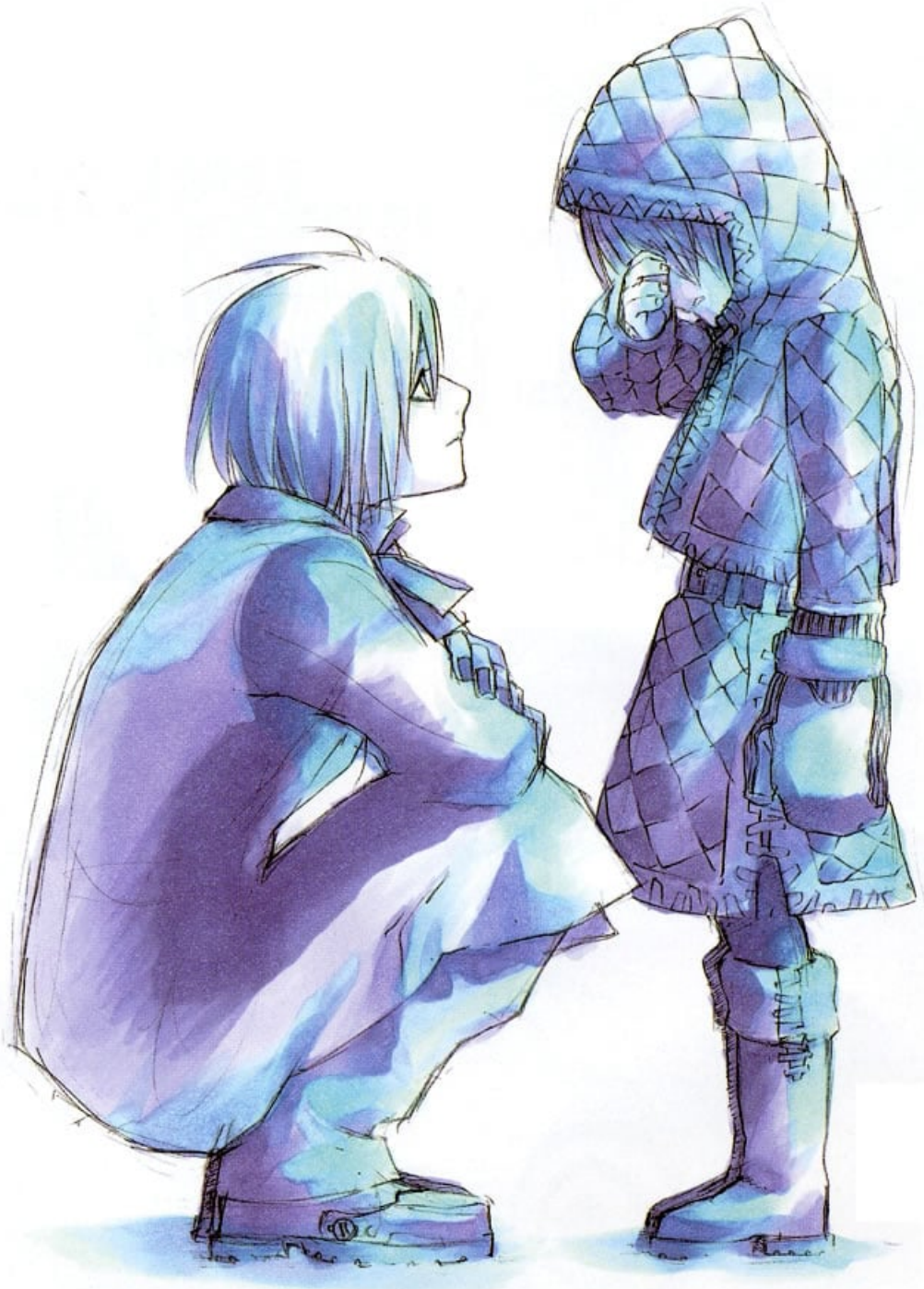
FROM OSAKA. WON FIRST PRIZE IN 9TH JUMP NOVEL COMPETITION. RECENTLY HAS REALIZED THAT WORKS BETTER ON THE OUTSIDE, SO HAS BOUGHT A MOBILE PC.



# D.Gray-man 1

ディー・グレイマン

旅立ちの聖職者



# D.Gray-man reverse

ディー・グレイマン

The Clergyman of Departure

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The Clergyman of Departure

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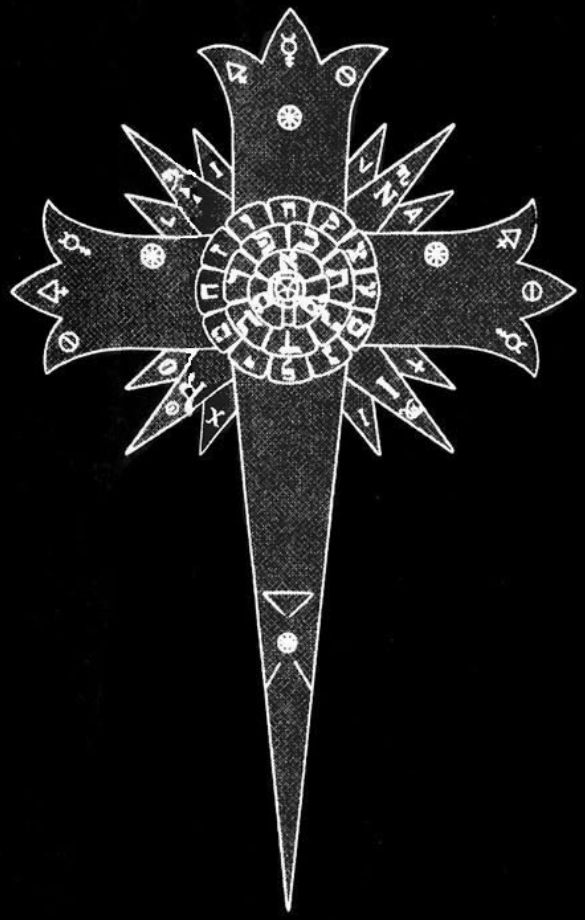
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# profile



KANDA YUU
AN EXORCIST OF THE "DARK RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION." HE FIGHTS WITH AN ANTI-AKUMA WEAPON IN THE FORM OF A JAPANESE SWORD, "MUGEN."

神田ユウ
「黒の教団」エクソシスト。日本刀型の対アクマ武器「六幻」で戦う。

GOZU
A FINDER OF THE "DARK RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION." ON THE WAY TO DANKERN VILLAGE, HE IS ATTACKED BY AKUMA.

ゴズ
「黒の教団」捜索部隊。ダンケルへ向かう途中でアクマに襲われる。

SOPHIA
THE DAUGHTER OF A GENERAL STORE STOREKEEPER WHO LIVES IN DANKERN VILLAGE. SHE GREETS KANDA AND GOZU WARMLY, BUT...

ソフィア
ダンケルで住む雑貨店店主の娘。神田とゴズを温かく迎えるが……。

KOMUI LEE
HEAD OFFICER OF THE "DARK RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION'S" SCIENCE SECTION. ALTHOUGH CAPABLE, HE IS A SCIENCE NERD WHOSE ACTIONS ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND.

コムイ
「黒の教団」班室長。有能だが何をしでかすか分からない科学オタク。

BAKU CHAN
THE BRANCH MANAGER OF THE "DARK RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION'S" ASIAN BRANCH. HIS HEART BURNS WITH RIVALRY AGAINST KOMUI.

バク
「黒の教団」アジア支部の支部長。コムイにライバル心を燃やしている。

ALLEN WALKER
A BOY WHO WILL BECOME AN EXORCIST. HIS LEFT HAND CAN TRANSFORM INTO AN ANTI-AKUMA WEAPON.

アレン・ウォーカー
エクソシストになる少年。左手が対アクマ武器に変化。

MOTHER
AN OLD WOMAN WHO LIVES IN THE CHURCH OF A SMALL TOWN IN BRITAIN. APPARENTLY ALLEN WAS INDEBTED TO HER ONCE BEFORE.

マザー
イギリスの小さな町の教会にいる老女。アレンがかつて世話になったらしい。

RIZA
A WOMAN WHO HAS JUST LOST HER SWEETHEART. SHE FIRST MEETS ALLEN AT A CEMETERY...

リー
恋人を亡くしたばかりの女性。墓地でアレンと出会う。

# The Clergyman of Departure



The Clergyman of the Journey - Part 1/3

D.Gray-man reverse



## NOTES:

*ALLEN'S THOUGHTS*
(ITALICS)

[BLAH]
(FLASHBACK VOICES)

* INDICATES SCENE CHANGE

IN THE MIDDLE OF PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS, A SPOTLIGHT SUDDENLY TURNED ON. AT THE SAME TIME, A MAN'S PLAYFUL VOICE REVERBERATED THROUGH THE AIR.

"COME NOW, LET'S CREATE SOME AKUMA~♥"

THERE, IN THE CENTER OF THE LIGHT, SOTOOD A STRANGE MAN WEARING A SILK HAT.

HIS AGE COULD NOT BE DETERMINED. HE WORE A CRISP BUTTONED COAT THAT ACCENTUATED HIS ROUND BELLY, AND ROUND GLASSES THAT HID HIS EYES. HE HAD A LARGE MOUTH THAT LOOKED AS IF IT COULD SWALLOW CHILDREN WHOLE, AND BOTH ENDS OF HIS LIPS WERE TWEAKED UPWARDS, MAKING HIM LOOK AS IF HE WERE PERMANENTLY SMILING.

IF HIS DESCRIPTION ENDED THERE, YOU MIGHT STILL THINK THAT HE WAS A NORMAL HUMAN BEING. HOWEVER, HIS BIG, LONG ELF-LIKE EARS PROVED THAT HIS WAS A WIDELY DIFFERENT EXISTENCE THAN THAT OF A NORMAL HUMAN BEING.

ALTHOUGH HE MAY APPEAR HUMOROUS, THERE IS SOMETHING REPULSIVE ABOUT THIS FIGURE.

*HE IS "THE MILLENNIUM EARL". I KNOW HIM.*

THE MILLENNIUM EARL COCKED HIS HEAD SLIGHTLY, STRIKING A CUTE POSE THAT DIDN'T FIT HIS LARGE BUILD.

"FIRST, YOU MUST PREPARE "THE AKUMA'S SKELETON" AS WELL AS TWO PEOPLE CREATED USING CERTAIN INGREDIENTS. ♥"

DELIGHTEDLY, THE MILLENNIUM EARL BROUGHT OUT A SKELETON MODEL. IT WAS CLEARLY NOT MADE FROM REAL HUMAN BONES, BUT SOMETHING ARTIFICIAL.

*THE AKUMA'S SKELETON. IT'S A DEMONIC-TYPE BODY WHICH WILL REVIVE AND CONTROL A SOUL THAT HAS BEEN PUT INTO IT.*

*NO. YOU CAN'T LET HIM USE THAT.*

"THE HUMANS ARE: ONE DECEASED A, ONE LIVING B. THESE TWO ARE CONNECTED TOGETHER BY A DEEP BOND, AND IT IS IDEAL IF A-SAN HAS DIED MAGNIFICENTLY FROM A TRAGIC DEATH. ♥"

SLOWLY, TWO SIMPLIFIED VERSIONS OF THE HUMAN BODY MADE FROM CLAY ROSE TO THEIR FEET. APPARENTLY, THESE WERE EXAMPLES OF HUMANS. ON THEIR CHESTS WERE CARVED "DECEASED A" AND "LIVING B".

"NOW, AFTER YOU'VE GATHERED UP YOUR INGREDIENTS, WE WILL FIRST CALL BACK THE DEAD A-SAN'S SOUL IN ORDER TO PUT IT INTO THE AKUMA SKELETON. ♥♥ TO DO THIS, IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE B-SAN, WHO IS CONNECTED TO A-SAN THROUGH A DEEP BOND, "CALL" THE SOUL."

B CALLED OUT A'S NAME. FROM THE HEAVENS, A BEING WRAPPED IN FLAMES DESCENDED. APPARENTLY, THIS WAS A'S SOUL.

THE SOUL ENTERED THE AKUMA'S SKELETON.

*NASTY. . . WHY DO I FEEL AS IF I'M REMEMBERING SOMETHING NASTY?*

THE MILLENNIUM EARL NODDED IN SATISFACTION.

"AFTER YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY CALLED BACK THE SOUL, B-SAN MUST BE KILLED BY A-SAN IN A BLOODY FASHION.♥"

THE AKUMA SKELETON, FILLED WITH A'S SOUL, OBEYED THE MILLENNIUM EARL'S WORDS AND SLASHED AT B WITH A KNIFE.

B SCREAMED AND FELL.

"NOW, ONTO THE FINISHING TOUCHES. ♥A-SAN MUST NOW ENTER B-SAN'S CORPSE... ♥"

THE AKUMA'S SKELETON FORCIBLY STUCK ITS FOOT INTO B'S MOUTH. SQUELCHING AND CRUSHING SOUNDS THAT WOULD NORMALLY MAKE ONE WANT TO CLOSE HIS EARS RESOUNDED THROUGH THE SILENCE.

STRETCHING THE SKIN AS IT BENT ITS BONES; THE AKUMA SKELETON COMPLETELY PUSHED ITSELF INTO THE INSIDE OF B'S BODY.

*NO, I DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS. I DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS KIND OF SCENE!*

"OKAY, WE HAVE WAITED THREE MINUTES.♥AFTER PUTTING ON B-SAN'S SKIN, THE A-SAN AKUMA IS COMPLETE!♥"

WITH VACANT EYES, B ROSE WITH A VICIOUS SMILE TWISTING ITS FEATURES.

"I'LL GIVE YOU A POINTER. TO GET THE BEST RESULTS, YOU SHOULD COMPLETELY DECEIVE B-SAN. ♥"

THE MILLENNIUM EARL SMILED IN GREAT CONTENTMENT. HIS SMILING FACE ELOQUENTLY SHOWED THAT HE ENJOYED SNEERING AT THE FOOLISHNESS OF PEOPLE - NOTHING ELSE GAVE HIM GREATER SATISFACTION.

*THE MILLENNIUM EARL. HE IS THE MAKER OF AKUMA, AND WANTS TO LEAD THIS WORLD TO ITS DEATH.*

AS THE MILLENNIUM EARL DISAPPEARED, THE DARKNESS RETURNED.

*WHAT IS AN AKUMA?*

*AN AKUMA IS BORN WHEN THE LIVING ARE EXPLOITED FOR THEIR EAGER WISH TO BRING BACK*

*THE DEAD. IT IS A BEING THAT CAUSES EVEN MORE TRAGEDY.*

*I..... I....*

THE WORLD REVOLVED....

AND ALLEN WALKER WOKE UP.

ALLEN LOOKED AROUND HIM IN CONFUSION. THERE WERE WOODEN CHAIRS LINED UP IN A ROW, HIS BRAIN PROCESSED THIS. A FEW MOMENTS LATER, HE REALIZED THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE SITTING IN THEM, DOZING.

THROUGH HIS HARD SEAT, HE COULD FEEL A RHYTHMICAL VIBRATION ROLLING UNDER HIM, AS WELL AS HEAR THE MECHANICAL SOUND OF WHEELS MOVING FIXEDLY.

*OH, THAT'S RIGHT. I WAS RIDING ON THE TRAIN. I MUST HAVE DOZED OFF.*

ALLEN SAT UP AND RAN A HAND THROUGH HIS PURE WHITE HAIR, SIGHING LIGHTLY.

AFTER COMING BY BOAT FROM INDIA, HE HAD FINALLY ARRIVED IN BRITAIN. HIS RELIEF MUST HAVE MADE HIM RELAX HIS GUARD IN SPITE OF HIMSELF. HE HAD EVEN ACCUMULATED A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF FATIGUE.

FEELING THE PRICKLE OF SOMEONE'S GAZE ON HIM, ALLEN LIFTED HIS HEAD.

AN ELDERLY WOMAN SITTING SEVEN SEATS IN FRONT OF HIM AVERTED HER FACE, BUT NOT BEFORE ALLEN CAUGHT THE LOOK OF CONFUSION IN HER EYES.

ALLEN SMILED BITTERLY. HE WAS USED TO PEOPLE LOOKING AT HIM CURIOUSLY. WITH HIS WHITE HAIR SURROUNDING A CHILD-LIKE FACE, NO ONE

COULD POSSIBLY TELL WHAT HIS AGE WAS. ACTUALLY, EVEN ALLEN DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HIS TRUE AGE WAS. HE FIGURED HE WAS SOMEWHERE AROUND 15 YEARS OLD....

*AN UNKNOWN AGE. COME TO THINK OF IT, I THINK SOMETHING HAPPENED IN MY DREAM...*

*BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER. WELL, NEVER MIND. I FEEL LIKE IT WASN'T A VERY NICE DREAM ANYWAY.*

ALLEN TURNED TO LOOK OUTSIDE THE WINDOW.

HE COULD SEE THE PEACEFUL RURAL LANDSCAPE OF BRITAIN RUN PAST.

AGAINST THE CLEAR BLUE SKY, THE LARGE EXPANSE OF GREEN GRASSLANDS HE VIEWED LOOKED ALMOST AS IF THEY WERE A CALM SEA. THE TREES, THICK WITH FRESH LEAVES, WHICH DOTTED THE GREEN PLAINS, LOOKED LIKE SMALL ISLANDS...

GENTLE LIGHT FLOODED THIS QUIET SPECTACLE. IT SEEMED TO INVITE HIM INTO A MORE LANGUID SLEEP.

AT THAT TIME, HE SAW HIS FACE REFLECTED IN THE GLASS WINDOW, AND REMEMBERED HOW THE WOMAN HAD LOOKED AT HIM ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE. INSTEAD OF HIS HAIR, SHE MIGHT HAVE FELT DISGUST AT SEEING THE SCAR THAT STARTED FROM THE TOP LEFT OF HIS FOREHEAD AND RAN DOWN HIS CHEEK.

ALLEN TOUCHED THE SCAR SOFTLY. IT WAS GIVEN TO HIM BY A VERY IMPORTANT PERSON, ONE WHO COULD NEVER BE REPLACED. HE REMEMBERED SO VIVIDLY THE TIME HE HAD GOTTEN THE SCAR THAT IT DIDN'T SEEM TO HIM AS IF IT HAD OCCURRED THREE YEARS AGO.

BUT, EVEN IF HE COULD STILL SEE THE MEMORIES OF THAT TIME, HE COULDN'T REMEMBER THE INTENSE PAIN HE HAD FELT THEN, AS IF A SHARP BLADE WAS CUTTING INTO HIS CHEST. HE COULD ONLY REMEMBER THE FEELINGS OF NOTHINGNESS AND LONELINESS, AS IF HE WERE FALLING TO THE BOTTOM OF A DARK SEA, OR AS IF HE WAS WANDERING ALONE THROUGH A LABYRINTH OF NIGHT WITH NO EXIT.

ALLEN QUIETLY CLOSED HIS EYES.

[DON'T STOP. KEEP ON WALKING.]

*YOU ALWAYS SAID THOSE WORDS, I KNOW. I WON'T STOP. I CAME TO BRITAIN ALL BY MYSELF, DIDN'T I? THIS WAY, I'VE COME CLOSER TO STANDING AT THE STARTING LINE.*

A SHARP PAIN RAN THROUGH THE TOP OF HIS HEAD. GROANING INVOLUNTARILY, ALLEN BENT HIS HEAD FORWARD AND GENTLY STROKED IT.

HE HAD ALREADY TAKEN THE BANDAGE OFF, BUT HE COULD STILL FEEL THE PAINFUL TEMPO COURSING THROUGH HIS SKULL.

"IT'S ALREADY BEEN TWO MONTHS SINCE MY MASTER HIT ME WITH HIS HAMMER..."

IN ORDER TO BECOME AN EXORCIST, A CLERGYMAN WHO SPECIALIZED IN EXTERMINATING AKUMA, ALLEN HAD ACTED AS AN ASSISTANT FOR GENERAL CROSS MARIAN.

THE RANK OF "GENERAL" IS AN IMPORTANT STATUS AMONG ALL OF THE EXORCISTS AND THEIR HEADQUARTERS, "THE DARK RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION", WHICH MANAGES THEM. AN IMAGE OF A FINE, NOBLE MAN MIGHT COME TO MIND UPON HEARING THOSE WORDS, BUT

ALTHOUGH GENERAL CROSS WAS A CAPABLE EXORCIST, ALLEN, UNDER HIS APPRENTICESHIP, FOUND THAT HIS PERSONALITY WAS UNPRECEDENTED, HIS ACTIONS WERE ILLOGICAL, AND HE SAMPLED MANY LOVERS.

HE PROVIDED FOR HIS LIVING EXPENSES BY LOANING MONEY FROM HIS LOVERS AND FRIENDS WHO WERE SCATTERED EVERYWHERE. WHENEVER GENERAL CROSS ENTERED A STORE, HE BASICALLY PUT EVERYTHING ON A TAB. ALLEN EVEN HAD TO RELUCTANTLY GAMBLE FOR MONEY WHENEVER THEY NEEDED FUNDS FOR THEIR TRAVELS.

*HE ISN'T A BAD PERSON.*

HIS TRAINING, WHICH TOOK THREE YEARS, SEEMED TO GO PAST IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE. THEN, TWO MONTHS AGO, DURING THEIR STAY IN INDIA, GENERAL CROSS FINALLY ALLOWED ALLEN TO DECLARE HIMSELF AN EXORCIST.

YES, THINGS WERE GOOD RIGHT UP UNTIL THEN.

BUT, IN ORDER TO BE FORMALLY ACCEPTED AS AN EXORCIST, HE WOULD HAVE TO GO TO THE ORGANIZATION'S HEADQUARTERS IN EUROPE TO GREET THEM. UNFORTUNATELY, HIS MASTER HATED HEADQUARTERS, AND DIDN'T WANT TO GO THERE. IN FACT, IT SEEMED THAT EVEN IN INDIA, HE WAS IN HIDING FROM THEM.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ALL RIGHT IF HE JUST **SAID** HE DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT WHY DID HE HAVE TO KNOCK HIS PUPIL OUT AND MAKE A BREAK FOR IT...?

ALLEN SIGHED, WONDERING HOW MANY TIMES HE HAD ALREADY DONE SO WHILE CONSIDERING THIS SUBJECT.

"I'M FINE WITH HIM RUNNING AWAY BECAUSE HE HATES HEADQUARTERS..."

*YES, HE REALLY ISN'T A BAD PERSON...*

"BUT HE SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST TOLD ME WHERE HQ WAS LOCATED...I ONLY KNOW THAT IT'S SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE."

A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION WAS SENT TO A STAFF LEADER NAMED KOMUI, BUT IF HE DIDN'T **ARRIVE** AT HEADQUARTERS, WHICH IS AN ESSENTIAL POINT HERE, IT WOULD BE MEANINGLESS.

AFTER HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS FROM THE BLOW, ALLEN SEARCHED DESPERATELY FOR HIS MASTER IN ORDER TO ASK HIM ABOUT HEADQUARTERS' LOCATION.

BUT IF THE ORGANIZATION COULDN'T EVEN TRACK HIM DOWN WITH THEIR INFORMATION NETWORK, WHAT HOPES DID HE HAVE OF FINDING HIS MASTERS' WHEREABOUTS? NOW THAT HE HAD A CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT IT, HE REALIZED THAT IT WAS A VERY USELESS EFFORT ON HIS PART.

ONCE, HE HAD CARELESSLY ENTERED HIS MASTER'S FAVORITE STORE. AFTER BEING THREATENED TO PAY UP THE TAB, BARNEY'S OLDER SISTERS HAD STRIPPED HIM OF ANYTHING OF VALUE, AND HE WAS FORCED TO LEAVE FOR BRITAIN PENNILESS.

ALLEN THOUGHT HE DESERVED SOME PRAISE FOR BEING ABLE TO GET HERE AT ALL.

HE BEGAN TO SEE SCENERY THAT HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH. THE TRAIN SLOWED TO A STOP AT A STATION. PERHAPS NO ONE WAS INTERESTED IN VISITING THE COUNTRYSIDE, BECAUSE ALLEN WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT OFF AT THE STATION.

THE PLACE ALLEN HAD REACHED WAS A TOWN THAT WAS FAMOUS FOR ITS BEAUTIFUL LAKE. OR YOU COULD SAY THAT IT WAS A RURAL TOWN THAT HAD NO OTHER SPECIAL LANDMARK WORTH MENTIONING.

ONCE HE EXITED THE SNUG STATION, A STONE-PAVED PLAZA APPEARED BEFORE HIS EYES. STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF IT WAS A RECTANGULAR, PARALLEL-PIPED CLOCK TOWER THAT QUIETLY GREETED HIM.

HOW NOSTALGIC...IT WAS ONLY THE SECOND TIME HE HAD COME HERE, BUT IT FELT AS IF HE HAD RETURNED TO HIS HOMETOWN.

ALTHOUGH IT WAS A RURAL TOWN, THE STORES LINED UP IN FRONT OF THE TRAIN STATION SHOWED THAT THEY WERE LIVING IN RELATIVE PROSPERITY. FEELING SOMEWHAT CHEERFUL, ALLEN WALKED DOWN THE ROAD, OBSERVING THE SHOPS AND THEIR SHOPPERS.

BASKING IN WARM SUNLIGHT AS HE LEFT THE SHOPPING DISTRICT, HE SAW GRASSLANDS SPREAD OUT BEFORE HIM. PRIVATE HOUSES WITH WALLS THE COLOR OF HONEY STOOD THERE BY ONES AND TWOS. ALLEN WALKED ON A GENTLY WINDING ROAD THAT WASN'T PAVED, ENJOYING THE FEELING OF THE GROUND.

THIS PLACE WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE TOWN IN THAT ALLEN COULD SEE THE CLEAR SKY FOR MILES. HE COULD HEAR THE CHIRPING OF THE BIRDS AND THE RUSTLING OF THE GRASS AS THEY SWAYED IN THE BREEZE. THERE WERE BARELY ANY PEOPLE AROUND, AND HE WAS FAR FROM THE TUMULTUOUS NOISE OF THE CITY.

*THIS REALLY IS A NICE PLACE. ALTHOUGH A BUSY TOWN WITH ALL THE CONVENIENCES IS ATTRACTIVE, THE COUNTRY-SIDE HAS ITS MERITS AS WELL.*

ALLEN TOOK A DEEP BREATH, REVELING IN THE GREENERY THAT CONTINUED INTO THE FAR OFF DISTANCE, AND THE UNINTERRUPTED BLUE SKY. IT FILLED HIM WITH A SENSE OF OPENNESS.

"YOU CAN COME OUT NOW, TIMCANPI."

A STRANGE OBJECT, THAT MOVED ITS WINGS RESTLESSLY LIKE A HUMMINGBIRD, SLIPPED OUT FROM THE BOSOM OF ALLEN'S COAT. IT WAS A GOLEM THAT GENERAL CROSS HAD GIVEN ALLEN AS HIS REPLACEMENT.

BIRD-LIKE WINGS EXTENDED FROM ITS SPHERICAL BODY. IT ALSO HAD A LONG TAIL THAT ENDED WITH A FLAME-SHAPED TIP.

A CHILD WHO HAD SEEN TIMCANPI HAD BEEN SO SURPRISED HE HAD STARTED TO CRY, SO ALLEN HAD STUFFED THE GOLEM INSIDE HIS CLOTHES WHILE ON THE TRAIN.

THE PLACE ALLEN WAS HEADED FOR NOW WAS A SMALL CHURCH LOCATED NEXT TO A LAKE.

A WOMAN NAMED "MOTHER" WAS THERE, SHE WAS ONE OF HIS MASTERS' PATRONS. SHE WAS THE ONE MOST LIKELY TO KNOW WHERE HQ WAS.

OR MORE TO THE POINT, IF SHE DIDN'T KNOW, HE'D BE AT A LOSS AS TO WHAT HE SHOULD DO NEXT. SHE WAS HIS ONLY RAY OF HOPE.

AS HE WALKED ALONG THE ROAD, THE AIR AROUND HIM STARTED TO GET COLDER LITTLE BY LITTLE. IT WAS PROBABLY BECAUSE THE PLACE WAS NEAR A LAKE.

AFTER A WHILE, THE TIP OF THE STEEPLE - SHAPED LIKE A DUNCE CAP - COULD BE SEEN. AS HE CONTINUED WALKING, ALLEN BEGAN TO SEE THE ANCIENT WOODWORK OF THE CHURCH IN ITS ENTIRETY. THE LAKE WAS VISIBLE FROM GAPS AMONG THE BUSHES.

*I'VE FINALLY ARRIVED.*

IN THE CEMETERY NEARBY THE CHURCH, THERE WAS A MAN WHOSE HEIGHT VAGUELY REMINDED ALLEN OF A LARGE ROCK. HE APPEARED TO BE WORKING REPAIRS ON THE TOMBSTONES. IT SEEMED THAT HE HADN'T CHANGED ONE BIT, HE WAS EVEN WEARING HIS USUAL STRAW-HAT AND OVERALLS.

IT WAS MOTHER'S SERVANT, BARBA.

NOSTALGIA OVERCOMING HIM, ALLEN SPOKE TOWARDS BARBA'S BACK.

"LONG TIME NO SEE, BARBA."

A FACE THE COLOR OF GINGER COOKIES TURNED TO HIS DIRECTION. SUCH A CUTE FACE WAS UNEXPECTED FROM SUCH A LARGE BUILD.

BARBA'S INITIALLY BEWILDERED LOOK WAS QUICKLY WIPED AWAY AS HE RAN TOWARDS ALLEN, MAKING THE EARTH TREMBLE.

"WAOOH!! LONG TIME NO SEE, LONG TIME NO SEE!! HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN? THREE YEARS!? SINCE YOU LEFT WITH FATHER CROSS ON A JOURNEY?"

"BARBA, CALM DOWN..."

HE COULDN'T FINISH HIS SENTENCE.

UNABLE TO AVOID HIM, ALLEN'S BODY WAS CRUSHED AND BLOWN AWAY BY BARBA.

AS ALLEN FLEW, HIS PATH DREW A BEAUTIFUL ARC THROUGH THE AIR.

HOWEVER, LANDING WAS A MAGNIFICENT FAILURE, AND HE CRASHED INTO THE GROUND.

THEN, BECAUSE OF THE SHOCK AND SHARP POAIN HE SUFFERED FROM THE CRASH, HE COULDN'T MOVE HIS BODY.

"...THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU TO CALM DOWN..."

*YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO EXPRESS YOUR JOY WITH YOUR ENTIRE BODY....*

AS ALLEN FELT THE COOLNESS OF THE GROUND, HE WAS GRATEFUL THAT THE BLOW HE HAD RECEIVED FROM GENERAL CROSS WAS ALREADY HEALED.

*THANK GOODNESS. IF I HAD TAKEN A DOUBLE PUNCH, I WOULD BE MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE PEOPLE UNDERNEATH THESE GRAVESTONES RIGHT NOW.*

"HUH? ALLEN, WHERE'S THE FATHER? HE DIDN'T COME WITH YOU?"

MYSTIFIED, BARBA SURVEYED THE SURROUNDINGS. IT WAS ONLY THEN THAT HE FINALLY NOTICED ALLEN'S FALLEN FORM ON THE GROUND.

"ALLEN, WHAT'S WRONG? IF YOU FALL ASLEEP THERE, YOU'LL CATCH A COLD."

BARBA PULLED AT ALLEN'S ARM, AND FORCIBLY DREW HIM TO HIS FEET.

ALLEN STAGGERED, SOMEHOW MANAGING A SMILE.

*YES, BARBA ISN'T A BAD PERSON EITHER.*

SPITTING OUT SOME BLOOD, ALLEN REPLIED,

"...MY MASTER HAS CURRENTLY GONE MISSING..."

"OH I SEE! MOTHER! ALLEN HAS COME BACK!!"

BARBA SHOUTED TOWARDS THE CHURCH'S DOOR BRIGHTLY.

A SCREECHING NOISE THAT HURT THE EARS RESOUNDED THROUGHOUT THE CEMETERY.

THEN THE CHURCH DOOR CREAKED OPEN.

"ALLEN, YOU SAY?"

AN ASTONISHED VOICE, THAT RESONANTED AS IF IT WERE COMING FROM BELOW GROUND, SOUNDED FROM INSIDE THE CHURCH.

WALKING STIFFLY WITH HER CANE, AN OLD WHITE-HAIRED WOMAN APPEARED FROM INSIDE THE CHURCH.

ALTHOUGH SHE WAS A SHORT WOMAN WHOSE HEAD COULD ONLY REACH ALLEN'S CHEST, THERE WAS A TERRIBLE DEMONIC AURA HANGING IN THE AIR ABOUT HER THAT WOULD MAKE A GROWN MAN FALTER.

IF HE WERE A CHILD, HE WOULD HAVE STARTED SCREAMING. REFLECTIVELY, HE THOUGHT "I WANT TO GO HOME", BEFORE HE SPOKE.

"IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, MOTHER."

SHE LOOKED BACK AT HIM WITH GLOWING BLUE EYES SETTLED IN WRINKLES ABOUT HER FACE, THEN DREW UP HER SHOULDERS AND STRAIGHTENED HER BACK.

"KEH...WHAT DID YOU COME FOR..?"

AS SHE SAID THIS, MOTHER'S BENT WAIST MADE AN ILL-SOUNDING CRACK.

"...DAMN IT...IT'S MY CHRONIC CRACKING-HIP DISEASE... I CAN'T MOVE..."

"HUH!?"

"GEEZ, MOTHER, WHENEVER YOU'RE SURPRISED, YOUR HIP STARTS CRACKING!"

"S-SHUT UP! I CAN'T HELP IT!"

AS BARBA CARRIED MOTHER ON HIS SHOULDERS, ALLEN FOLLOWED THEM INTO THE CHURCH.

*

"ALRIGHT, NOW HOW ABOUT SOME POKER?"

RECOVERING QUICKLY, MOTHER SAT AT A TABLE, DEALING CARDS WITH AN AIR THAT SAID THERE WOULD BE NO USE ARGUING WITH HER.

ALLEN'S EYES FOLLOWED MOTHER'S SWIFT HAND MOVEMENTS.

*THE FIRST TIME I WAS HERE, IT WAS FOR THE REHABILITATION OF MY LEFT ARM. I REMEMBER WE USED TO PLAY CARDS EVERY DAY THEN.*

*IT WAS JUST THE FOUR OF US - MOTHER AND BARBA, AND MY MASTER - SITTING AROUND THE TABLE...*

ALLEN LOOKED AROUND THE LIVING ROOM. THERE WAS A LARGE FIREPLACE THAT WASN'T IN USE NOW. A WINDOW WITH A LATTICE, DECORATED WITH A WORN-OUT ROSE-PATTERN CURTAIN. A CROSS AND A CANDLE HOLDER WERE PLACED ON A BOARD WITH A BEAUTIFUL DESIGN OF A LEAF ETCHED IN.

*IT HASN'T CHANGED.*

"C'MON, PICK UP YOUR CARDS ALREADY!"

ALLEN SMILED BITTERLY.

*THAT'S RIGHT. I REMEMBER WHENEVER I BEGAN TO MOVE SLOWLY, I'D END UP FLYING BACKWARDS FROM MOTHER'S ROAR OF OUTRAGE.*

*SHE HASN'T CHANGED. REALLY, NOTHING HAS CHANGED. AND I'M SURPRISINGLY RELIEVED ABOUT THAT.*

BARBA, WHO WAS ALSO SITTING AT THE TABLE, SMILED HAPPILY.

ALLEN TOOK THE FIVE CARDS THAT HAD BEEN DEALT TO HIM.

HE IMMEDIATELY GLANCED AT MOTHER. AS USUAL, SHE HAD ON A POKER FACE. HE COULDN'T READ WHAT SORT OF CARDS SHE WAS HOLDING FROM HER FACIAL EXPRESSION.

"SO, WHAT DID YOU COME HERE FOR?"

"ACTUALLY..."

ALLEN RELATED HIS TALE OF HOW HE WOULD HAVE TO GO TO THE ORGANIZATION'S HEADQUARTERS IF HE WANTED TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS AN EXORCIST. YET HIS MASTER HAD LEFT HIM TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE RIGHT WHEN HE NEEDED HIM THE MOST, AND HAD NEGLECTED TO TELL HIM WHERE HEADQUARTERS WAS LOCATED.

"I THOUGHT THAT MAYBE YOU WOULD KNOW WHERE HEADQUARTERS IS LOCATED, MOTHER."

"WELL, I AM IN CHARGE OF TAKING CARE OF THIS PLACE WHILE YOUR MASTER'S AWAY. I KNOW HEADQUARTERS, OF COURSE I DO."

AT THOSE WORDS, ALLEN PATTED HIS CHEST IN RELIEF. IF MOTHER HADN'T KNOWN, HE WOULDN'T

HAVE ANY MORE LEADS TO FOLLOW. HE HAD SUFFERED DIFFICULTIES THESE PAST TWO MONTHS, BUT NOW HE WAS BEING REWARDED AT LAST..!

MOTHER GAVE HIM A FIXED STARE.

"W-WHAT IS IT?"

"YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO BECOME AN EXORCIST?"

"YES."

"SO YOU'VE PREPARED YOURSELF FOR IT, RIGHT?"

"YES."

*PREPARED MYSELF, HUH?*

ALLEN STUDIED HIS LEFT HAND INTENTLY.

HIS HAND WAS COVERED IN WRINKLES, AND WAS A THICK RED COLOR THAT LOOKED AS IF IT HAD BEEN DYED IN BLOOD. A CROSS WAS EMBEDDED INTO THE BACK OF HIS HAND, IT WAS HIS ANTI-AKUMA WEAPON.

*BECAUSE I WAS BORN WITH THIS MYSTERIOUS ARM, I WAS ABANDONED BY MY PARENTS. IT WAS THEN THAT MANA WALKER ADOPTED ME.*

*MY BODY WAS BORN WITH AN ANTI-AKUMA WEAPON. IT MAY HAVE BEEN MY FATE.*

*BUT WHAT SPURS ME ON ISN'T FATE OR ATONEMENT.*

ALLEN TOSSED TWO CARDS FROM HIS PLAYING HAND, AND PICKED UP ONE FROM THE PILE.

AT THAT MOMENT, MOTHER'S CANE DESCENDED ON HIM.

"OW!"

WITH THE BACK OF HIS HAND STRUCK, ALLEN CRIED OUT. THE CARD HE HAD JUST PICKED UP FLUTTERED TO THE TABLE.

MOTHER GAVE HIM SUCH A TERRIBLE LOOK THAT IT WOULD HAVE PUT THE THREE GORGONA SISTERS TO SHAME.

A CHILL RAN DOWN HIS SPINE, ALLEN THOUGHT HE'D RATHER BE TURNED TO STONE.

FROM MOTHER'S MOUTH, A THREATENING VOICE RASPED OUT.

"YOU DID A 2-CARD CHANGE, DIDN'T YOU? YOU CAN'T HOLD LESS THAN FIVE CARDS. THIS NEIGHBORHOOD MAY BE FULL OF BONKLERS THAT'LL ACCEPT THAT, BUT DID YOU THINK YOU'D BE ABLE TO USE SUCH A CHEAT AGAINST ME!?"

"I-IT WAS JUST A FORCE OF HABIT..."

*I WAS BEING CARELESS. IT'S NOT NECESSARY FOR ME TO WIN BY FORCE HERE.*

"JUST WHAT SORT OF LIFE WERE YOU LIVING?!"

"I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY. I'M ACTUALLY BROKE, SO IN ORDER TO PAY THE TRAVEL EXPENSES TO COME HERE, I HAD TO DO THINGS LIKE THIS TO EARN SOME MONEY."

ALLEN APOLOGIZED EARNESTLY AS HE BOWED, RUBBING HIS FOREHEAD AGAINST THE TABLE.

"BUT ALLEN, YOU'RE ABLE TO USE YOUR LEFT HAND PRETTY WELL NOW."

BARBA SMILED AS HE SAID THIS.

"YEAH..."

*THAT'S RIGHT. WHEN I CAME HERE BEFORE, A NERVE ON MY LEFT HAND WAS PARALYZED. I COULDN'T EVEN MOVE ONE FINGERS.*

*BUT AFTER UNDERGOING REHABILITATION, LITTLE BY LITTLE, I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO GRAB THE CARDS NORMALLY.*

*AND NOW I'M ABLE TO CHEAT SO WELL THAT I CAN'T BE DETECTED BY AN ORDINARY PERSON...*

"BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BECOME AN EXORCIST. YOU COULD JUST DEFEAT THEM ON YOUR OWN."

"WELL YES, BUT THE PROBABILITY OF ME FINDING AKUMA BY MYSELF IS VERY CLOSE TO CHANCE."

THE MAKER OF AKUMA, THE MILLENNIUM EARL, WAS MOVING ABOUT FREELY IN THIS VAST WORLD.

IN ORDER TO OPPOSE THIS EVIL INFLUENCE, A SPECIAL AGENCY CALLED THE "DARK RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION", WAS ESTABLISHED.

"I WANT INFORMATION. IF I BECOME AN EXORCIST OF THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE POPE, I CAN TRACK THE MOVEMENTS OF THE EARL AND HIS AKUMA USING THEIR INTELLIGENCE NETWORK. I CAN EVEN GET INTO A LOT OF NORMALLY RESTRICTED PLACES. THE TITLE OF EXORCIST IS REALLY CONVENIENT."

"I SEE!"

BARBA NODDED, A LOOK OF ADMIRATION SPARKLING HIS FEATURES.

"WELL, I WON'T GIVE A DAMN NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU."

AFTER SPEAKING SUCH STABBING WORDS, MOTHER BEGAN TO COLLECT THE CARDS.

"GEEZ, MOTHER, YOU'RE BEING TOO HARSH."

BARBA KNIT HIS EYEBROWS TOGETHER.

ALLEN WAS USED TO MOTHER'S BLUNT WORDS. WITHOUT PAYING TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO THEM, HE ASKED,

"SO, GOING BACK TO THE SUBJECT OF WHERE HQ IS LOCATED..."

"YEAH, I'LL TELL YOU."

MOTHER SMILED. SOMETHING SINISTER LURKED BEHIND THAT SMILE, EVEN A GOBLIN WOULD WILLINGLY GO BAREFOOT TO ESCAPE FROM IT.

ALLEN PATIENTLY WAITED FOR HER NEXT WORDS. THE ANSWER THAT HE FEARED CAME.

"HOWEVER, IT WON'T BE FOR FREE."

*...YES, MOTHER ISN'T A BAD PERSON EITHER...*

WONDERING HOW MANY MORE TIMES HE WOULD THINK THIS PHRASE TODAY, ALLEN COULD ONLY GIVE A SMALL SIGH.

AS THE CURTAIN OF NIGHT FELL, THE CEMETERY SITUATED NEARBY THE CHURCH WAS VEILED IN SILENCE.

STANDING THERE JUST AS QUIETLY WAS A WOMAN IN A MODEST DRESS. HER SOFT DARK BROWN HAIR WAS CUT AT CHIN-LENGTH.

THE WOMAN STOOD UNMOVING IN FRONT OF A GRAVESTONE, AS IF SHE WERE A STONE HERSELF.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF A THICKET, WHICH WAS SLIGHTLY SEPARATED FROM HER, ALLEN WATCHED.

"IT'S THAT GIRL."

MOTHER WHISPERED CLOSE TO HIS EAR.

"WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER?"

ALLEN ASKED, BEARING MOTHER'S WEIGHT AS HE CARRIED HER ON HIS BACK.

"ABOUT A MONTH AGO, SHE LOST HER LOVER TO AN ILLNESS. SHE COMES HERE EVERY NIGHT PRACTICALLY IN TEARS."

IT WAS TRUE. WHEN HE LOOKED CLOSER, HE COULD SEE THAT HER THIN SHOULDERS WERE TREMBLING SLIGHTLY.

"HER NAME IS RIZA. WILL YOU HELP BRING HER BACK TO HER FEET?"

"EH!? ME!?"

MOTHER NODDED DEEPLY, AS IF THIS DECISION WAS ONLY NATURAL.

"IF YOU DO, I'LL TELL YOU WHERE HQ IS LOCATED."

"EEHH!? WHAT'S UP WITH THAT!?"

"SHUT UP! GO ON, GET TO IT!!"

MOTHER SHOVED ALLEN FORWARD WITH ALL HER STRENGTH, AND ALLEN ROLLED OUT OF THE THICKET.

*BUT MY HEART ISN'T READY FOR THIS YET!*

TRYING TO GIVE MOTHER AN APPEALING LOOK, SHE RESPONDED BY RAISING HER CANE THREATENINGLY OVER HER HEAD.

*I GUESS I'VE GOT TO GO.*

ALLEN QUIETLY APPROACHED RIZA.

"G-GOOD EVENING."

ALLEN SPOKE OUT AWKWARDLY.

LARGE BROWN EYES FILLED WITH TEARS LOOKED IN HIS DIRECTION.

NOW THAT HE COULD HER SEE HER CLEARLY, SHE LOOKED MUCH YOUNGER THAN HE HAD ORIGINALLY GUESSED. SHE PROBABLY WASN'T A DAY OVER TWENTY.

RIZA'S CHEEKS, WET WITH TEARS, TWITCHED. LIKE A FRIGHTENED KITTEN, RIZA SLOWLY BEGAN TO BACK AWAY.



IF A MAN YOU DIDN'T KNOW SUDDENLY SPOKE TO YOU IN A CEMETERY AT NIGHT, **OF COURSE** YOU WOULD BE FEELING UNEASY.

*I'VE GOT TO CLEAR UP THIS MISUNDERSTANDING!*

"AH, I'M NOT A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER! I'M A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH; I JUST ARRIVED HERE RECENTLY..."

AS IF SHE COULD SENSE HIS DESPERATION, RIZA STOPPED MOVING.

"ARE YOU A MONK..?"

"YES. YES I AM."

ALLEN NODDED VIGOROUSLY. SHE PROBABLY JUDGED FROM HIS CLOTHES -- BLACK COAT, BLACK TROUSERS, AND A RIBBON TIE AROUND HIS NECK. IT WAS A LIE, BUT IN ORDER TO PUT HER AT EASE, HE WOULD HAVE TO STICK WITH IT.

"IT SEEMS YOU COME HERE EVERY NIGHT, AND I WAS WORRIED...UM...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?"

RIZA'S EXPRESSION FROZE.

AND IN THE NEXT MOMENT, RIZA'S FACE CRUMPLED LIKE A YOUNG CHILD'S. TEARS ROLLED FROM HER LARGE EYES AND DOWN HER CHEEKS LIKE TWIN WATERFALLS.

"U-UM..."

*I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN A WOMAN IS CRYING!*

IGNORING ALLEN, WHO WAS TROUBLED BY HER TEARS, RIZA BEGAN TO TALK.

"I...I'M THE LOVER OF THE PERSON WHO'S BURIED HERE."

RIZA GAZED AT THE CROSS TENDERLY.

"WHEN WE FIRST MET, HE ALREADY KNEW THAT HE WAS DYING OF AN INCURABLE DISEASE. BUT WE DECIDED TO SPEND THE REST OF HIS DAYS TOGETHER, LOVING EACH OTHER."

RIZA SQUATTED ON THE GROUND, AND LOVINGLY BRUSHED HER FINGERS OVER THE TOMBSTONE.

"IT WAS PAINFUL...BECAUSE I LOVED HIM SO MUCH. I STAYED BY HIS SIDE UNTIL THE END..."

WITHOUT WIPING AWAY HER SEEMINGLY NEVERENDING TEARS, RIZA CONTINUED.

"WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR US TO PART, HE SAID 'GOODBYE'....AND HE SAID IT WITH A SMILE. SO, EVEN THOUGH I WAS WEEPING SORROWFULLY, I SMILED AND SAID 'GOODBYE' BACK..."

"THAT...MUST HAVE BEEN TOUGH."

ALLEN SAID TO RIZA, WHO WAS GAZING FORLORNLY AT THE CROSS.

"YES...EXTREMELY. BUT, I'VE ACCEPTED HIS DEATH. IF I DON'T LIVE HAPPILY, THEN HE'LL FEEL SAD IN HEAVEN."

ALLEN GAZED AT RIZA, WHO HAD LIFTED BOTH HANDS TO COVER HER FACE.

"BUT...YOUR HEART ISN'T READY FOR THAT YET, IS IT..?"

The Clergyman of the Journey - Part 1/3

D.Gray-man reverse

# To be continued...

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See you on next issue!

# The Clergyman of Departure

2/3



D.Gray-man reverse



## NOTES:

*ALLEN'S THOUGHTS*
(ITALICS)

[BLAH]
(FLASHBACK VOICES)

* INDICATES SCENE CHANGE

RIZA LOOKED AT HIM.

"I WAS ABLE TO CARE FOR HIM, SO I HAVE NO REGRETS. I PLANNED TO ACCEPT HIS DEATH IN THE BEGINNING, BUT..."

"RIZA!"

A MAN'S LOUD VOICE RESOUNDED THROUGHOUT THE CEMETERY.

THE SOUND OF HEAVY FOOTSTEPS COMING THEIR WAY WARNED THEM OF THE APPROACH OF A FAT, MIDDLE-AGED MAN.

"DOCTOR."

RIZA REGARDED THE MAN WITH SURPRISE. APPARENTLY, THEY WERE ACQUAINTANCES.

*A MUSTACHED MAN DRESSED IN A WELL-TAILORED BUSINESS SUIT AND A PERFECTLY TIED NECK-TIE. I SEE, HE'S A DOCTOR.*

"I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU! SO YOU WERE HERE AFTER ALL."

THE DOCTOR GAVE RIZA A SMILE AS HE ROUGHLY PANTED FOR BREATH.

"I WAS WORRIED! WHEN I CAME TO VISIT YOUR HOME, YOU WEREN'T THERE."

THE DOCTOR WAS SWEATING PROFUSELY; HE MUST HAVE RUN ALL THE WAY TO THE CEMETERY.

"I'M SORRY..."

"NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT, AS LONG AS YOU'RE SAFE. HMM? WHO ARE YOU?"

THE DOCTOR TURNED HIS EYES TOWARDS ALLEN.

"U-UM, HE'S A NEW MONK WHO'S JUST ARRIVED HERE."

"I'M ALLEN WALKER."

ALLEN BOWED HIS HEAD AT HIM.

"A MONK, EH..? YOU'RE VERY YOUNG."

THE DOCTOR REGARDED HIM WITH FAINT SURPRISE.

"I WAS WORRIED ABOUT RIZA-SAN, SO I SPOKE TO HER."

"I SEE. WELL, SHE IS FEELING HEART-SICK AT THE MOMENT. SHE'S RECEIVING COUNSELING AT MY PLACE. I THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN, BUT I'VE TAKEN THE RESPONSIBILITY UPON MYSELF TO BRING HER BACK TO HER FEET...."

THE DOCTOR GENTLY LAID A HAND ON RIZA'S SHOULDER.

"RIZA, LET'S GET YOU HOME. HE WON'T COME BACK EVEN IF YOU STAY HERE."

"...DOCTOR, I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THAT..."

"WHAT A HAGGARD FACE. HAVE YOU BEEN CRYING ALL THIS TIME? YOU SHOULD REST FOR TODAY; YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT TOMORROW, OKAY?"

RIZA NODDED HER HEAD TIMIDLY.

"WELL, ALLEN-SAN. PLEASE EXCUSE US."

THE DOCTOR LIFTED HIS HAT LIGHTLY IN SALUTE. BESIDE HIM, RIZA BOWED HER HEAD.

"I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WORRY."

"OH NO, NOT AT ALL, I'LL BE HAPPY TO LISTEN TO WHATEVER YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT. PLEASE STOP BY THE CHURCH AT ANY TIME."

ALLEN STOOD IN HIS SPOT, GAZING AT THE TWO AS THEY WALKED OUT OF THE CEMETERY.

*

THE NEXT MORNING, ALLEN LEFT THE CHURCH.

"HAVE A SAFE TRIP! MAKE SURE TO GIVE HER THOSE FLOWERS!"

ALLEN RESPONDED BY WAVING THE BOUQUET IN HIS HAND AT THE EQUALLY WAVING BARBA.

SINCE LAST NIGHT, HE COULDN'T HELP BUT WORRY ABOUT RIZA.

THE WOMAN HAD WATCHED OVER HER SWEETHEART AND WAS DESPERATE TO ACCEPT HIS DEATH. ALTHOUGH THAT APPEARED COURAGEOUS OF HER, IT WAS ALSO HEARTBREAKING.

IF THERE WAS ANYTHING HE COULD DO TO EASE HER HEART...

THE DOCTOR CAME TO MIND.

*RIZA HAS A SPECIALIST FOR THIS. THIS MIGHT NOT BE THE KIND OF ROLE I'M CUT OUT TO PLAY, BUT I REALLY CAN'T LEAVE HER ALONE.*

LAST NIGHT, WHEN HE TOLD MOTHER THIS, SHE GRINNED AND GAVE HIM RIZA'S HOME ADDRESS.

*"THAT MEDDLESOME BRAT." IS WHAT SHE'S PROBABLY THINKING ABOUT ME.*

NEVERTHELESS, ALLEN WENT INTO TOWN, SEARCHING FOR THE ADDRESS MOTHER HAD GIVEN HIM.

"LET'S SEE...AFTER THREE BLOCKS, TURN LEFT..."

WHILE LOOKING FOR THE BOOKSTORE TO THAT WAS A DISTINGUISHED MARKER, HE SAW A FAMILIAR MAN WALKING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD.

IT WAS THE DOCTOR WHO HAD COME SEARCHING FOR RIZA IN THE CEMETERY LAST NIGHT. PERHAPS HE WAS RETURNING HOME AFTER SHOPPING, FOR HE WAS CARRYING A PAPER BAG IN HIS HAND.

THE DOCTOR LOOKED THIS WAY AND THAT, APPARENTLY SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING AS HE HEADED TOWARDS A PUBLIC TELEPHONE. THE SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR BOTHERED ALLEN, SO HE NONCHALANTLY GOT CLOSER.

ALLEN WALKED TOWARDS THE FRONT OF THE BOOKSTORE, WHICH WAS NEXT TO THE TELEPHONE, GRABBED A NEWSPAPER AND TRIED NOT TO LOOK LIKE HE WAS STRAINING HIS EARS.

"YEAH, IT'S ME. I KNOW THAT! I'LL MAKE SURE TO TRANSFER YOU THE MONEY THROUGH MY BANK ACCOUNT BY THE DEADLINE!"

THE DOCTOR SHOUTED INTO THE TELEPHONE RECEIVER WITH A DESPERATE LOOK ON HIS FACE.

ALLEN COULDN'T IMAGINE THAT THIS FLUSTERED APPEARANCE BELONGED TO THE COMPOSED MAN HE HAD MET LAST NIGHT.

*IS HE IN DEBT? HE MUST BE TALKING TO HIS FINANCIER.*

QUIETLY, ALLEN LOWERED THE NEWSPAPER A BIT TO OBSERVE THE SITUATION.

AS IF HE WERE GETTING NERVOUS OR IRRITATED, THE DOCTOR BEGAN TO TAP HIS FOOT ON THE GROUND.

"I KNOW THAT! DAY AFTER TOMORROW, RIGHT? I AM GOING TO GET SOME MONEY! YEAH, I'LL PAY YOU THE REST! SO PLEASE, STOP COMING TO THE HOSPITAL. GOT THAT?!"

THE DOCTOR RUDELY HUNG UP THE RECEIVER WITH A SMALL CLANG.

HE GAVE A TIRED SIGH.

"THAT DAMN USER..."

THE DOCTOR MURMURED, IN A VOICE FILLED WITH BLOOD-CURDLING RESENTMENT.

IT WAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM THE KIND VOICE HE HAD SPOKEN TO RIZA WITH YESTERDAY.

*WHAT THE? WHAT'S WITH THIS CHANGE IN HIM?*

MAYBE HE FELT ALLEN'S GAZE ON HIM THEN, BECAUSE THE DOCTOR SUDDENLY LOOKED IN HIS DIRECTION.

ALLEN HASTILY LIFTED THE NEWSPAPER TO COVER HIS FACE.

A SHORT TIME LATER, THE SOUND OF COINS BEING PUSHED INTO A SLOT WAS HEARD.

"HELLO...YES, IT'S ME. I'M EXTREMELY SORRY FOR INTRUDING SO MANY TIMES. YOU ARE BUSY AFTER ALL."

AS THE DOCTOR HELD THE RECEIVER TO HIS EAR, HE BOWED REPEATEDLY.

*MAYBE HE'S TALKING TO ANOTHER FINANCIER? IT MUST BE A REMARKABLY LARGE DEBT.*

THE DOCTOR APPEARED TO BE MORE ANXIOUS ABOUT THE PERSON HE WAS TALKING TO IN THIS CALL THAN THE ONE BEFORE, BECAUSE SWEAT AROSE TO DRIP DOWN FROM HIS FACE.

"IT'S ABOUT THAT CASE. I'VE KEPT YOU WAITING LONG ENOUGH. YES, TODAY, TODAY FOR SURE. I'LL BE ABLE TO PUT EVERYTHING IN ORDER. WHEN THE TIME COMES, I'LL CALL YOU RIGHT AWAY!"

THE DOCTOR REPLACED THE RECEIVER, AND KICKED THE NEAREST WALL AS HARD AS HE COULD.

"DAMN IT, IT'S BECAUSE THAT RIZA IS BEING SO DAMN STUBBORN!"

*RIZA!?*

ALLEN ALMOST CRIED OUT LOUD UPON HEARING SUCH UNEXPECTED WORDS.

*WHY DID HE SAY HER NAME?*

*COULD RIZA BE THREATENING THE DOCTOR, FORCING HIM TO LEND HER MONEY?*

*BUT SHE DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THAT KIND OF PERSON....*

COMPLETELY MYSTIFIED, ALLEN CONTINUED TOWARDS RIZA'S HOUSE.

*

RIZA'S HOUSE WAS SITUATED IN A RESIDENTIAL AREA THAT WAS SLIGHTLY SEPARATED FROM THE CENTER OF THE TOWN. IT WAS AN OLD, COZY-LOOKING WOODEN HOUSE WITH AN ADORABLE R-ED ROOF.

ALLEN WAS REALLY NERVOUS ABOUT VISITING THE HOUSE OF A WOMAN WHO HE HAD JUST MET LAST EVENING. SHE HAD BEEN CRYING THEN, SO THE U-NPLEASANTNESS WAS DOUBLED.

*BUT I JUST CAN'T LEAVE HER ALONE.*

ALLEN TOOK A DEEP BREATH, AND KNOCKED ON T-HE DOOR.

"YES?"

RIZA, WHO WAS WEARING A SIMPLE DRESS, STUCK HER FACE OUT.

AND SMILED.

"AH, THE MONK FROM YESTERDAY...ALLEN-SAN, WASN'T IT?"

SO SHE REMEMBERED HIM, ALLEN SIGHED IN RELIEF.

"I'M SORRY FOR MY UNEXPECTED VISIT. I WAS S-TILL A BIT CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY..."

"I SEE. I'M SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WORRY."

RIZA SMILED SWEETLY. HER EYES WERE STILL SLIGHTLY RED, BUT THERE WAS NO ANGUISH BEHIND HER SMILE.

"AH, COME IN IF YOU'D LIKE. YOU HAVE GOOD TIMING, I WAS JUST THINKING OF PUTTING ON SOME TEA."

"I SEE. OKAY, I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT...AND, UM...HERE."

ALLEN GAVE HER THE BOUQUET THAT BARBA HAD MADE FOR HIM. IT WAS FULL OF ROSES TOUCHED WITH A LIGHT PINK COLOR. BARBA HIMSELF HAD PROUDLY RAISED THE FLOWERS IN HIS PRIVATE GARDEN.

"WOW, THANK YOU. THEY'RE VERY PRETTY. I'LL PUT THEM IN A VASE RIGHT AWAY."

ALLEN'S HEART FELT A PINPRICK OF PAIN AS RIZA SMILED INNOCENTLY AT HIM. ALTHOUGH HE WAS GIVEN NO OTHER CHOICE AT THE TIME, HE **HAD** LIED TO HER ABOUT BEING A MONK.

WHEN HE ENTERED THE HOUSE, THE DELICIOUS SCENT OF TEA TICKLED HIS NOSE.

"PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE. I'LL HAVE EVERYTHING READY SOON."

"OKAY."

AS RIZA BROUGHT OUT TEACUPS FROM A CUPBOARD, ALLEN SAT DOWN ON A CHAIR.

TRYING TO KEEP HIMSELF OCCUPIED, ALLEN LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM. THE CURTAINS AND TABLECLOTH WERE

A LIGHT CREAM COLOR. IT MADE THE ROOM LOOK CALM AND BRIGHT, WHICH FIT RIZA'S IMAGE VERY WELL.

WHEN HE LOOKED MORE CLOSELY, HE COULD SEE THAT THE WINDOWS WERE POLISHED TO MIRROR-LIKE PERFECTION. ALSO, THERE WASN'T EVEN A SPECK OF DUST ON THE FLOOR.

"YOU HAVE A LOVELY HOUSE."

"THANK YOU."

JUST THEN, ALLEN NOTICED THAT IN THE OTHERWISE SPOTLESS ROOM, THE TABLECLOTH HAD TRANSPARENT DOT-SHAPED STAINS, AND A BALLED-UP HANDKERCHIEF.

*SHE WAS REMEMBERING HER LOVER AND CRYING ALONE AGAIN?*

ALLEN GAZED SADLY AT RIZA AS HE WATCHED HER FILL A POT WITH HOT WATER.

HE THEN NOTICED A ROW OF FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS DECORATING A SHELF. IN THE PHOTO CLOSEST TO HIS SIDE, A YOUNG MAN LYING ON TOP OF A BED IN HIS PAJAMAS WAS SNUGGLING WITH RIZA.

"HE LOOKS WORN OUT, DOESN'T HE?"

ALLEN JUMPED IN HIS SEAT, STARTLED. RIZA HAD APPEARED AT HIS SIDE, HOLDING A TRAY.

"AT THAT TIME, HE COULD LONGER GET UP FROM BED..."

*SO THE YOUNG MAN IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH IS THE OWNER OF THAT GRAVE.*

RIZA GENTLY PLACED THE CUPS OF TEA ON THE TABLE BEFORE SHE SAT DOWN OPPOSITE ALLEN.

"I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT."

"NO, I'M SORRY TOO. I SPOKE TO YOU OUT OF THE BLUE..."

ALLEN REMEMBERED SEEING THE DOCTOR'S TROUBLED APPEARANCE EARLIER IN THE DAY.

"BY THE WAY, WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO YOU HAVE WITH THAT DOCTOR? HE WAS EXTREMELY CORDIAL TO YOU."

"THE TRUTH IS, I'M A NURSE...AND HE'S THE DOCTOR AT THE HOSPITAL I'M WORKING IN RIGHT NOW. I...EVER SINCE I LOST "HIM", IT'S BEEN HARD RECOVERING FROM THE GRIEF. THE DOCTOR SAID IT WAS AN ILLNESS OF THE HEART, AND HE WOULD GIVE ME COUNSELING."

"IS THAT SO..."

THE DOCTOR'S OVERPROTECTIVE SPEECH AND CONDUCT LAST NIGHT CAME TO HIS MIND.

"U-UM...IS YOUR COUNSELING EXPENSIVE?"

THE DOCTOR HAD TALKED AS IF THERE WAS A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT WOULD SOON COME INTO HIS POSSESSION. HE HAD ALSO MENTIONED RIZA'S NAME, AS IF SHE WAS CONNECTED TO THIS EVENT.

RIZA LOOKED AT HIM BLANKLY.

"EH? NO, HE TOLD ME HE DIDN'T NEED MONEY. HE ONLY SAID I SHOULD DO MY BEST TO CONTINUE MY WORK."

"I SEE, SO, UMM...IS THAT DOCTOR REQUESTING LOANS FROM YOU?"

"OH NO, HE WOULDN'T. I DON'T HAVE ANY RELATIVES, SO I HAVE TO USE ALL MY POWER TO MAKE A LIVING ON MY OWN. UM, ALLEN-SAN, COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE HEARD THE RUMORS ABOUT THE HOSPITAL?"

"HUH?"

"THE HOSPITAL HASN'T BEEN UNDER GOOD MANAGEMENT LATELY, SO THERE'S BEEN A RUMOR THAT IT'LL GO BANKRUPT. I ASKED THE DOCTOR AND HE TOLD ME THAT EVERYTHING WAS FINE, BUT I'M STILL CONCERNED ABOUT IT."

"AH, UMMM...THAT'S NOT IT. I'M SORRY FOR ASKING SUCH STRANGE THINGS."

ALLEN LAUGHED DECEPTIVELY.

THE RUMOR THAT THE HOSPITAL'S MANAGEMENT IS IN DANGER MAY BE TRUE. IF THAT'S SO, IT MAKES SENSE THAT THE DOCTOR IS TAKING OUT LOANS, AND THAT HE'S NOT USING THE HOSPITAL PHONE FOR THESE TRANSACTIONS, BUT A PUBLIC ONE.

*BUT WHY DID HE MENTION RIZA'S NAME? IT SEEMS LIKE SHE KNOWS NOTHING.*

*I GUESS I'LL ASK MOTHER ABOUT IT LATER. I'VE GOT TO FOCUS ON RIZA FOR NOW.*

"WHERE DID YOU MEET YOUR SWEETHEART?"

"IT WAS AT THE HOSPITAL WHERE I WORKED. WHEN I BEGAN WORKING AS A NURSE, HE - LENNY, WAS ALREADY HOSPITALIZED. IN THE BEGINNING, WE WERE STRICTLY IN A NURSE AND PATIENT RELATIONSHIP, BUT GRADUALLY WE GREW ATTRACTED TO ONE ANOTHER..."

RIZA ROSE AND TOOK A PHOTOGRAPH OFF THE SHELF. ALLEN ALSO STOOD UP TO GAZE AT THE PICTURE WITH RIZA.

"LENNY WAS STILL 21 YEARS OLD, BUT IT WAS SURPRISING HOW QUIETLY HE HAD ACCEPTED HIS FATE. WHEN SOMEONE IS TOLD THAT THEY ONLY HAVE A SHORT TIME LEFT TO LIVE, THERE ISN'T A PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO WOULDN'T FEEL SOME SORT OF FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS. EVEN FOR ME... WHEN WORDS WERE THROWN AT ME, I WOULD BE HURT, BUT HE ALWAYS REMAINED SELF-POSSESSED. HE EVEN ENCOURAGED ME WHEN I BECAME DEPRESSED BECAUSE OF UNFAMILIAR WORK..."

"EVEN THOUGH HIS BODY HAD WEAKENED, HIS HEART REMAINED STRONG..."

RIZA NODDED HER HEAD SOFTLY IN ASSENT.

ALLEN TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT WAS NEXT TO THE PREVIOUS ONE. BESIDES RIZA AND HER LOVER, THERE WAS ANOTHER YOUNG WOMAN WITH CHESTNUT-COLORED HAIR. SHE HAD A LOVELY SMILE.

"WHO IS THIS PERSON? YOUR OLDER SISTER?"

"NO, THAT'S SARA. SHE'S ALSO A NURSE, AND MY SENIOR. SINCE SHE HAD ALWAYS WATCHED OVER THE TWO OF US, SARA'S VERY WORRIED ABOUT ME RIGHT NOW...EVEN THOUGH SHE LOST A LOVER HERSELF TWO MONTHS AGO."

"HUH? REALLY!?"

"YES. HE WAS A SHOES CRAFTSMAN NAMED RICHARD-SAN. WHEN HE LEFT TOWN FOR BUSINESS, HE WAS RUN OVER BY AN OUT OF CONTROL CARRIAGE."

TEARS BEGAN TO WELL UP IN RIZA'S EYES.

"HE WAS AN INCREDIBLY NICE PERSON; RICHARD-SAN AND SARA MADE A WONDERFUL COUPLE. HE AND I GOT ALONG TOGETHER AS WELL, SO THE THREE OF US WOULD OFTEN GO TOGETHER FOR FUN."

"SO...SARA-SAN ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS BEEN HAVING A HARD TIME DEALING WITH RICHARD-SAN'S DEATH, RIZA-SAN..."

*SHE WAS MOURNING NOT ONLY FOR HER SWEETHEART, BUT FOR HER FRIEND. AFTER CONTINUING LIKE THIS...*

*IN THIS SITUATION, ANYONE WOULD BEGIN TO FEEL DEFEATED.*

"I'M...STILL OKAY. EVER SINCE WE STARTED GOING OUT, I RESIGNED MYSELF TO THE FACT THAT I WOULD SOON HAVE TO PART WITH LENNY. BUT, SARA'S SITUATION WAS DIFFERENT. SHE SUDDENLY LOST SOMEONE WHO SHE COULD HAVE SPENT THE REST OF HER LIFE WITH...I CAN'T IMAGINE...

HOW HARD IT MUST BE FOR HER."

ALLEN QUIETLY HANDED HER HIS HANDKERCHIEF.

"I'M SORRY. I'M ALWAYS CRYING IN FRONT OF YOU."

"IT'S BETTER TO CRY WHEN YOU WANT TO CRY. DON'T W-ORRY ABOUT THE HANDKERCHIEF, I HAVE SEVERAL."

LOOKING AT THE FRESH HANDKERCHIEF, RIZA SMILED.

"OH YES. YOU WERE ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING YESTER-DAY, WEREN'T YOU?"

"HUH?"

"WHEN YOU SAID, 'I PLANNED TO ACCEPT HIS DEATH IN THE BEGINNING, BUT...' WERE YOU GOING TO SAY SOMETHING MORE? BECAUSE, UM...I'LL LISTEN TO WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO SAY. I MIGHT BE ABLE TO COMFORT YOU IF YOU TOLD ME."

RIZA'S FACE BECAME DISTORTED AND TEARS BEGAN TO SPILL FROM HER EYES ONCE AGAIN.

"...I CAN'T TELL YOU..."

"WHY NOT? TRY ME!"

HOWEVER, RIZA TURNED AWAY FROM ALLEN, AND LOOKED DOWNWARDS IN ORDER TO HIDE HER EYES.

HER SLENDER HANDS TIGHTLY CLENCHED HER SKIRT.

"I...WANT TO SEE HIM."

HER VOICE SOUNDED AS IF IT WERE BEING WRUNG FROM HER THROAT.

TEARS DRIPPED ONTO THE FLOOR.

BEING UNABLE TO FIND ANY SOOTHING WORDS TO SAY TO HER, ALLEN COULD ONLY WATCH RIZA.

"I'M SORRY...I'M ACTING LIKE THIS EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT ME AND CAME ALL THIS WAY."

WIPING HER FACE, RIZA FINALLY LIFTED HER HEAD.

"NO, IT'S MY FAULT. I WAS BEING PUSHY..."

DOES SHE STAY LIKE THIS ALL DAY LONG, REMEMBERING HER LOST LOVE AND DROWNING IN HER TEARS ALONE?

*IF SHE STAYS LIKE THIS...IT'LL BE TOO PAINFUL.*

"...RIZA-SAN, DO YOU HAVE ANY BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF TODAY?"

"NOT REALLY...I HAVE A MEDICAL EXAM APPOINTMENT WITH THE DOCTOR IN THE EVENING, BUT NOTHING ELSE UNTIL THEN..."

"THEN, WILL YOU GIVE ME A TOUR OF THE TOWN?"

"HUH?"

RIZA WAS BEWILDERED BY THE SUDDEN PROPOSAL.

*DURING PAINFUL TIMES, YOU'VE GOT TO GO OUTSIDE AND GET A CHANGE OF SCENERY TO CHANGE YOUR MOOD.*

*JUST LIKE WHEN MY MASTER TOOK ME TO MOTHER'S PLACE BACK THEN.*

ALLEN CONTINUED.

"U-UM...I CAME ALL THE WAY FROM INDIA TO ENGLAND."

"INDIA? YOU LIVED THAT FAR AWAY?"

RIZA'S EYES GREW WIDE IN SURPRISE.

"YES...IT WAS FAR."

*WHENEVER I THINK ABOUT THE LONG JOURNEY I HAD TO ENDURE, I CAN FEEL THE CORNERS OF MY EYES GROW HOT...*

*NO WAIT, I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW!*

"I WANT TO BE GET FAMILIARIZED WITH THIS TOWN. SO I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD SHOW ME AROUND."

"I...SEE. VERY WELL."

ALTHOUGH SHE APPEARED SLIGHTLY PUZZLED, RIZA BOWED HER HEAD IN ASSENT.

"WAH, THAT'S GREAT! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!"

AS ALLEN ENTHUSIASTICALLY BOWED TO HER, RIZA'S SMILING FACE RETURNED.

"IS THERE SOME PLACE YOU WANT TO GO, OR SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SEE?"

"UMMM, WELL, LET ME THINK..."

JUST THEN, A LOW RUMBLING SOUND RESOUNDED THROUGH THE ROOM.

"OH MY, EVEN THOUGH IT'S SUCH LOVELY WEATHER OUTSIDE... COULD IT BE THUNDER?"

RIZA LOOKED OUTSIDE THE WINDOW DOUBTFULLY.

ALLEN'S FACE TURNED BRIGHT RED.

"...I'M SORRY. THAT WAS MY STOMACH."

"O-OH MY...SILLY ME."

RIZA PRESSED A HAND OVER HER MOUTH HASTILY TO REPRESS A GRIN.

"UMM...FIRST I'LL BE HAPPY IF YOU COULD SHOW ME THE NEAREST STORE THAT SELLS ANYTHING DELICIOUS..."

"VERY WELL, HOW ABOUT WE GO TO THE SHOPPING DISTRICT THAT'S IN FRONT OF THE TRAIN STATION?"

SO THE TWO LEFT THE HOUSE AND HEADED TOWARDS THE SHOPPING DISTRICT.

"THERE IS AN AMAZINGLY DELICIOUS BAKERY THERE. I THINK THE BREAD WILL BE FRESH-BAKED THIS TIME OF DAY."

"THAT SOUNDS NICE! LET'S GO, LET'S HURRY THERE!"

ALLEN PURPOSELY SPOKE IN A BRIGHT TONE.

ONCE THEY REACHED THE STONE PAVED ROAD OF THE SHOPPING DISTRICT, RIZA POINTED WITH A FINGER.

"IT'S THE STORE WITH THE RED- AND WHITE-STRIPED EAVES."

AS THEY APPROACHED IT, A SIGN IMITATING THE SHAPE OF BREAD APPEARED. "BEN'S BAKERY" WAS WRITTEN ON IT.

"THE OWNER BEN-SAN STUDIED IN LONDON, SO HE'S ABLE TO MAKE THESE HEAVENLY TASTING BREAD AND SCONES."

AS THEY OPENED THE DOOR AND ENTERED, THEY WERE GREETED WITH A DELICIOUSLY FRAGRANT SMELL.

ALLEN'S EYES WERE IMMEDIATELY DRAWN TO THE SHELVES OF BREAD LINED UP AND ARRANGED NEATLY TOGETHER.

"WHICH WOULD YOU LIKE?"

"UMMM...LET'S SEE..."

*'ALL OF THEM'...BUT OF COURSE I CAN'T SAY THAT, EVEN THOUGH EVERY ONE OF THEM LOOKS SO GOOD. I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE A HARD TIME CHOOSING.*

"DO YOU RECOMMEND ANYTHING?"

"YES, WELL, YOU DO SEEM VERY HUNGRY. HOW ABOUT SANDWICHES? THERE'S CHICKEN, CHEESE, AND HAM."

"SANDWICHES WERE FIRST CREATED IN BRITAIN, WEREN'T THEY? IT'LL BE A PLEASURE."

"YOU'RE RIGHT. SINCE YOU'VE COME ALL THE WAY TO BRITAIN, YOU SHOULD EAT OUR SPECIALTY FOODS. AH, THEN, HOW ABOUT SOME SCONES TOO? HAVE YOU EVER EATEN ONE?"

"NO. WHAT IS THAT?"

*THE FIRST TIME I CAME HERE, I WASN'T ABLE TO EAT SUCH STYLISH THINGS...*

"IT'S A BAKED PASTRY WHERE THE OUTSIDE IS BROWNED, BUT THE INSIDE IS PUFFY AND SWEET. IT'S A TYPICAL BRITISH SWEET."

"WAAH, THOSE SOUND NICE! AH, THEY SELL JAM HERE TOO, DON'T THEY?"

BOTTLES OF JAM, IN VIVID SHADES OF RED, ORANGE, AND DEEP PURPLE WERE LINED UP NEATLY ON THE SHELVES. THEIR COLLECTIVE BRIGHT COLORS LOOKED LIKE FLOWERS IN BLOOM. JUST BY LOOKING AT THEM, ONE FELT HAPPIER. AS IF RIZA HERSELF FELT SO, HER VOICE BECAME BRIGHTER.

"ALL OF THESE ARE MADE FROM FRESH LOCAL FRUITS. LET'S SEE...A BERRY-FILLED TASTE WOULD GO WELL WITH SCONES. ALSO, WHEN YOU ADD CLOTTED CREAM, IT TASTES THE BEST!"

"WHAT IS 'CLOTTED CREAM'?"

ALLEN ASKED, HAVING NEVER HEARD THESE WORDS BEFORE.

"I GUESS IT'S EASIER TO THINK OF IT AS BUTTER THAT'S LIKE WHIPPED CREAM? YOU PUT IT ON A FRESH-BAKED CRUNCHY SCONE WITH JAM, AND EAT IT THAT WAY."

ALLEN COULD FEEL HIS MOUTH BEGINNING TO WATER. EVEN IN HIS IMAGINATION, IT SEEMED DELICIOUS. *I WANT TO TASTE IT SOON!*

"WELCOME RIZA! WHAT A LOVELY COMPANION YOU HAVE WITH YOU TODAY."

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WEARING A LACE CAP AND RED-STRIPED APRON SMILED AT THEM FROM BEHIND THE COUNTER.

"THIS IS NANCY, BEN'S MISTRESS. NANCY, THIS IS A NEW MONK OF THE CHURCH, ALLEN-SAN."

"NICE TO MEET YOU."

NANCY APPEARED TO BE THE SAME AGE AS RIZA. HER CHEEKS WERE FLUSHED RED AS IF TO SYMBOLIZE HER HAPPINESS.

"YOU'RE NOT WITH SARA TODAY?"

"NO, SARA HAD WORK."

"IT MUST BE ROUGH, THE WORK OF A NURSE. I THINK YOU AND SARA HAVE DONE ENOUGH ALREADY, THAT DOCTOR IS ANOTHER STORY, ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO YOU TWO."

*I WONDER WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE DOCTOR. COME TO THINK OF IT, HE WAS HOLDING A PAPER BAG. DID HE BUY SOMETHING FROM THIS STORE BEFORE MAKING THAT TELEPHONE CALL?*

ALLEN WAITED FOR NANCY TO CONTINUE TALKING.

"I DON'T KNOW WHY HE WAS SO IRRITABLE, BUT I WISH HE'D STOP BEING SO DISAGREEABLE TOWARDS THE CHILDREN."

"WHAT HAPPENED?"

"THIS MORNING, HE CAME LIKE ALWAYS TO BUY SOME BREAD. AT SOME POINT, DANNY FROM NEXT DOOR COLLIDED INTO HIS LEG. THE DOCTOR ROARED AT HIM, SAYING 'YOU DAMN BRAT! YOU DIRTIED MY CLOTHES, NOW THEY'RE RUINED!' I FELT SO SORRY FOR DANNY. HE'S ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD!"

"I'M SORRY..."

AS RIZA LOOKED DOWN, NANCY'S TONE BECAME A BIT PANICKED,

"IT'S NOT SOMETHING **YOU** SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR! IT'S JUST, EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY FOR AN INSTANT, HE'S STILL A DOCTOR. I'D LIKE HIM TO BE A MORE VIRTUOUS PERSON. BY THE WAY, WHAT'S YOUR ORDER?"

"SCONES AND BLACK CURRANT JAM WITH SOME CLOTTED CREAM, AND COULD YOU WRAP UP THREE KINDS OF SANDWICHES FOR US?"

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR ORDER. I'LL GIVE YOU A CRANBERRY SCONE AS A BONUS, OKAY?"

"OH, THANK YOU."

"NOT YOU, I MEANT FOR THIS NEW BOY HERE."

NANCY WINKED MISCHIEVOUSLY AT ALLEN, WHO SUDDENLY FELT VERY NERVOUS.

ONCE THEY LEFT THE STORE, RIZA GRINNED WIDELY AT HIM.

"ALLEN-KUN, YOU'RE SO POPULAR."

"WHA-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!"

RIZA GIGGLED AS SHE WATCHED ALLEN PANIC.

"NANCY HAS SUCH HIGH STANDARDS; SHE WOULDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO LOOK TWICE AT THE COUNTLESS MEN WHO TRY TO PROPOSE TO HER. EVEN BEN, HE HAD TO PRESENT HER WITH SOME BREAD AND A ROSE EVERY DAY FOR A MONTH BEFORE SHE ACCEPTED A DATE FROM HIM. BUT, AFTER JUST ONE GLANCE, YOU'VE WON HER HEART ALLEN-KUN. IF BEN KNEW, HE'D MAKE A MAJOR UPROAR."

"N-NO WAY. UM...UMMM, WHAT SHOULD I DO?!"

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE FLUSTERED ALLEN REALIZED THAT RIZA WAS TRYING TO HOLD BACK HER LAUGHTER.

"...WERE YOU TEASING ME?"

"YES, WELL, IT IS TRUE THAT NANCY HAS TAKEN A LIKING TO YOU, ALLEN-KUN."

ALLEN THEN NOTICED THAT AT SOME POINT DURING THE DAY, RIZA HAD STARTED TO ADDRESS HIM IN A COMFORTABLE, INFORMAL TONE, TALKING WITH HIM AS IF THEY WERE FRIENDS.

IT SEEMS SHE HAS STARTED TO RELAX. IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND INVITE HER OUTSIDE AFTER ALL.

"SANDWICHES AND SCONES, HUH..?"

RIZA LOOKED AS IF SHE WERE CONSIDERING SOMETHING.

"WHAT'S WRONG?"

"WELL, IT'S THIS COMBINATION. SINCE THIS IS A SPECIAL EVENT, I WAS WONDERING IF WE SHOULD HAVE SOME AFTERNOON TEA."

"WHAT IS THIS, 'AFTERNOON TEA'?"

"IT'S AN EVENT WHERE YOU PASS THE AFTERNOON SLOWLY, ENJOYING TEA AND A LIGHT MEAL."

"HEY, THAT SOUNDS ELEGANT. I'D LIKE TO DO THAT VERY MUCH!"

"REALLY? THEN WE'LL NEED TEA. LET'S GO TO THE TEA SHOP."

"THERE'S A STORE THAT SPECIALIZES IN SELLING TEA?"

"OF COURSE! THIS IS BRITAIN, THE ORIGINAL HOME OF TEA."

RIZA'S CHEERFUL MOOD MADE ALLEN ENJOY HIMSELF AS WELL. HER SMILING FACE WAS MUCH BETTER THAN HER TEAR-STREAKED ONE.

"I'M SO GLAD. IT'S BEEN QUITE AWHILE SINCE I'VE HAD AFTERNOON TEA."

"IS THAT SO?"

"YES, I ALWAYS USED TO SHARE IT WITH SARA AND RICHARD..."

RIZA TRAILED OFF. SHE MUST'VE NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO HOLD A TEA PARTY SINCE RICHARD WAS KILLED IN THE ACCIDENT.

"WHAT KIND OF TEA WOULD YOU LIKE? ASSAM? OR PERHAPS DARJEELING?"

"I HAVE NO IDEA. I'LL LET YOU CHOOSE FOR ME."

"OKAY, LET'S HAVE ASSAM MILK TEA."

ONCE THEY ENTERED THE TEA STORE A MASSIVE LADY, THAT REMINDED ONE FAINTLY OF A BARREL, EXTENDED BOTH HER HANDS TOWARDS THEM IN GREETING.

"OH RIZA. YOU'VE BROUGHT ALONG ANOTHER CUTE BOY. YOUR BOYFRIEND?"

THE LADY LAUGHED.

"OH STOP THAT. HE'S A NEW MONK OF THE CHURCH. COULD YOU MAKE ASSAM MILK TEA FOR TWO, AND PUT IT IN A POT FOR US?"

"HMM, A MONK ARE YOU? AND A REALLY THIN ONE AT THAT. YOU SHOULD EAT MORE! FOR MEN, THEIR BODIES ARE THEIR CAPITAL. AND RIZA, WE'VE GOT TO GET SOME MORE MEAT ON YOU. HERE, TAKE THIS."

ALONG WITH THE POT, THE LADY LAID DOWN A LARGE BUNDLE ON THE COUNTER WITH A THUD.

"IT'S ROAST BEEF. WE WERE PLANNING TO FINISH IT IN ONE SITTING, BUT WE DRANK TOO MUCH YESTERDAY. NOW WE CAN'T STAND EATING ANY MORE."

"THANK YOU, BUT WE'VE ALREADY BOUGHT PLENTY OF SCONES AND SANDWICHES. WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FINISH THIS BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE."

"I HUMBLY ACCEPT."

ALLEN FLASHED A SMILE.

"HUH?"

AFTER ALLEN SPOKE THOSE WORDS, RIZA TURNED TO STARE AT HIM IN SURPRISE.

"BUT ALLEN-KUN, THIS IS SUCH A LARGE ROAST BEEF. I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF WE'LL BE ABLE TO FINISH OFF THE SCONES..."

"IT'S ALL RIGHT. THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO PROBLEM. EVEN THOUGH I LOOK LIKE THIS, I'M PRETTY GLUTTONOUS."

THE LADY HEARTILY SLAPPED HER STOMACH AND LAUGHED.

"WHAT A FUNNY CHILD. I LIKE YOU! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SUNDAY'S MASS!"

AS SHE HELD OUT THE POT, THE LADY, SUDDENLY SERIOUS, TURNED TOWARDS RIZA.

"SPEAKING OF WHICH, IS SARA DOING ALL RIGHT?"

"YES, WHY?"

"WELL, IT'S JUST THAT EVER SINCE RICHARD DIED, SHE HASN'T COME TO OUR STORE ONCE. SHE LIKES OUR EARL GREY, SO SHE USED TO PASS BY ONCE A WEEK..."

"WHEN I GO TO THE HOSPITAL IN THE EVENING, I'LL ASK HER ABOUT IT."

"WILL YOU? THEN PLEASE, GIVE THIS TO HER AS WELL."

THE LADY PUT A TEABAG INTO A PAPER BAG, AND HANDED IT OVER TO RIZA.

THE LOOK SHE GAVE RIZA WAS GENTLE, LIKE A MOTHER'S.

"DELICIOUS TEA CAN HEAL THE HEART. IT WOULD BE GREAT IF OUR TEA COULD DO SO FOR HER SAKE AS WELL."

"THANK YOU. I'M SURE SARA WILL BE DELIGHTED."

RIZA HELD THE POT AND PAPER BAG WITH CARE.

"ENJOY!"

SMILING BACK AT THE LADY, THE TWO LEFT THE STORE.

"THIS PLACE IS NICE."

"YOU THINK SO?"

"YES, THERE ARE MANY FRIENDLY PEOPLE HERE...AND EVEN MORE DELICIOUS FOOD. AND THIS PLACE IS FULL OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN."

RIZA BURST INTO LAUGHTER AT ALLEN'S WORDS.

"IF THE LADY IN THE SHOP HAD HEARD YOU SAY THAT, SHE WOULD HAVE MADE ENOUGH TEA FOR YOU TO CARRY AWAY IN A BARREL."

AS THEY LEFT THE SHOPPING DISTRICT AND ARRIVED IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, RIZA TURNED DOWN A LANE LINED WITH SHRUBS.

"IT'S QUITE A CLIMB. WILL YOU BE ALL RIGHT?"

"YES, BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, RIZA-SAN? SHALL I CARRY SOME BAGS FOR YOU?"

"I MIGHT LOOK FRAIL, BUT I'M STILL A NURSE. I'VE LIFTED BED-RIDDEN PATIENTS BEFORE, SO I HAVE PLENTY OF ARM STRENGTH AND STAMINA."

AFTER CLIMBING UP THE PATH FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THEY REACHED THE TOP OF A HIGH HILL.

"WOW..."

FROM THEIR VANTAGE POINT, HE COULD CLEARLY SEE THE GENTLY-SLOPING GREEN HILLS AND THE PASTURES SPREAD TOWARDS THE HORIZON.

THERE WAS ALSO A WONDERFUL FRESH WIND THAT TEASED HIS HAIR.

"FEELS GOOD, DOESN'T IT?"

"YES, VERY."

"I USED TO COME HERE OFTEN WITH SARA AND RICHARD... I WANTED TO BRING LENNY WITH US, BUT HE WASN'T ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL ROOM."

IN THE SILENCE, RIZA'S VOICE GREW CHOKED.

"IN THE SPRING, THERE WOULD BE RAPE BLOSSOMS BLOOMING IN ABUNDANCE. IT LOOKED LIKE SOMEONE HAD SPREAD OUT A YELLOW CARPET. WHEN SUMMER APPROACHED, THE GREEN COLOR OF THE

GRASSES AND LEAVES WOULD INTENSIFY. AND THEN, THE TASSEL FLOWERS, THE THISTLE FLOWERS, AND THE BRITISH YELLOWHEADS WOULD BLOOM, LENDING THEIR VIVID COLORS..."

RIZA PLUCKED A BLOOMING PURPLE FLOWER NEARBY.

"ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL? THIS IS CALLED A BLUEBELL."

"I SEE."

"WHENEVER I CAME HERE, I BROUGHT BACK FLOWERS FOR LENNY AS A SOUVENIR. SINCE HE WAS CONFINED TO HIS HOSPITAL ROOM, I WANTED HIM FEEL THE CHANGING SEASONS AND OUTSIDE AIR AS WELL."

THE WIND SUDDENLY BLEW IN A GREAT GUST, MAKING THE VIEW BELOW APPEAR TO BE A ROLLING GREEN CARPET.

*OH, IT REALLY IS LIKE A GREEN OCEAN.*

IT WAS BEAUTIFUL, A SCENE THAT COULD SURELY MOVE THE HEART. *I WANT TO SHOW THIS TO THE PERSON MOST PRECIOUS TO ME.*

*MANA...*

"RIZA, I'VE LOST AN IMPORTANT PERSON OF MY OWN BEFORE."

ALLEN SUDDENLY BROUGHT UP OUT OF NOWHERE.

RIZA TURNED TO LOOK INTENTLY AT HIM WITH HER BROWN EYES, WHICH APPEARED TO BE FULL OF WISDOM.

"HIS NAME WAS MANA. HE WAS MY FATHER, HE ADOPTED ME. I... WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I WAS ABANDONED BY MY PARENTS. MANA PICKED ME UP."

"ALTHOUGH WE WEREN'T RELATED BY BLOOD, HE RAISED ME, AND LOVED ME. HE'S THE PERSON WHO'S MOST PRECIOUS TO ME, AND NO ONE CAN REPLACE HIM. WHEN HE DIED, I COULDN'T EAT, I COULDN'T SLEEP. I WAS LIKE A DOLL, A DOLL THAT COULD ONLY SHED TEARS. I ALSO FOOLISHLY WISHED TO BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE."

*AS A REWARD FOR THAT WISH, I RECEIVED A CURSE.*

ALLEN GENTLY PLACED A HAND OVER HIS LEFT EYE.

"...HOW DID YOU GET BACK ON YOUR FEET?"

RIZA ASKED TIMIDLY.

"THERE WAS A PERSON WHO OFFERED HIS HAND TO ME, AND POINTED ME DOWN THE RIGHT ROAD."

AN EXORCIST'S FACE FRAMED WITH RED HAIR CAME TO HIS MIND.

[WON'T YOU BECOME AN EXORCIST?]

*EVER SINCE THAT DAY, I REGAINED MY PURPOSE AND FOCUSED INTENTLY UPON IT. AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS ABLE TO LAUGH ONCE AGAIN.*

"IT'S STILL HARD FOR ME WHEN I REMEMBER THINGS ABOUT MANA. BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I'M HAPPY. WE WERE ABLE TO CREATE PLEASANT MEMORIES. ALTHOUGH HE'S DEAD, I CAN FEEL HIM STILL SUPPORTING ME, EVEN TODAY. THAT'S WHY I CAN STILL LAUGH. THAT'S WHY I CAN STILL LIVE."

The Clergyman of the Journey - Part 2/3

D.Gray-man reverse

# To be continued...

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See you on next issue!




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# The Clergyman of Departure

## Part 3/3



NOTES:

*ALLEN'S THOUGHTS* (ITALICS)
|BLAH| (FLASHBACK VOICES)
• INDICATES SCENE CHANGE

A PARTICULARLY STRONG WIND SUDDENLY BLEW PAST.

THE PURPLE FLOWER IN RIZA'S HAND WAS GENTLY BLOWN AWAY. AS THE FLOWER SLOWLY DISAPPEARED DOWN THE HILL IT COULD BE SEEN SWAYING TOGETHER WITH THE BREEZE.

RIZA GRIPPED HER HANDS TOGETHER.

"YOU'RE RIGHT...THE DAYS THAT I'VE SPENT WITH HIM HAVEN'T DISAPPEARED. I'M SURE THAT THE MEMORIES I SHARED WITH MY IMPORTANT PERSON WILL ALWAYS REMAIN INSIDE OF ME."

"YES, I'M SURE OF IT."

ALLEN AND RIZA SMILED AT EACH OTHER. RIZA THEN TOOK THE POT IN ONE HAND.

"WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?"

"RIGHT AWAY!"

AS HE DRANK THE TEA RIZA POURED FOR HIM AND ATE SCONES, ALLEN CONTINUED TO GAZE IN RAPTURE UPON THE NATURE OF BRITAIN, NEVER GETTING BORED WITH IT.

*

THE SKY GRADUALLY CHANGED TO RED.

RIZA STOOD UP WITH A STARTLED CRY.

"AH! I MUST GO TO THE HOSPITAL. I JUST REMEMBERED I STILL HAVE THAT APPOINTMENT WITH THE DOCTOR."

"LET ME ESCORT YOU THERE."

ALLEN SAID CLEARLY.

"OH NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO..."

"I'D LIKE TO TAKE ANOTHER STROLL AROUND BRITAIN. PLEASE, LET ME ACCOMPANY YOU."

RIZA SMILED AT ALLEN AS HE HELD OUT HIS HAND TEASINGLY.

"VERY WELL THEN, PLEASE DO SO. AH, WAIT A SECOND."

JUST AS RIZA WAS ABOUT TO ACCEPT ALLEN'S HAND, SHE TOUCHED THE SLEEVE OF HIS COAT INSTEAD.

"YOUR SLEEVE BUTTON, IT'S ALMOST COME APART."

"OH, YOU'RE RIGHT."

THE BUTTON ON HIS LEFT SLEEVE WAS DANGLING ON ITS THREAD.

"I'LL FIX IT FOR YOU RIGHT AWAY, SO GIVE ME YOUR COAT."

"EH? BUT..."

"NEEDLEWORK IS MY SPECIALITY. I'LL HAVE IT FIXED IN A JIFFY."

AS RIZA SMILED SWEETLY AT HIM, ALLEN COULDN'T HELP BUT SMILE BACK.

"...OKAY, PLEASE DO."

FROM HER SKIRT POCKET, RIZA TOOK OUT A SMALL SEWING KIT. WITH A SKILLED HAND, SHE ATTACHED THE BUTTON BACK TO THE SLEEVE.

"THANK YOU."

"HERE, I'M FINISHED."

CAREFULLY, SHE HANDED BACK HIS BLACK COAT.

"THANK YOU."

ALLEN PUT ON HIS COAT. MAYBE IT WAS HIS IMAGINATION, BUT HIS COAT FELT WARMER THAN BEFORE.

*

THE HOSPITAL WAS POSITIONED TWO ROADS ACROSS FROM THE SHOPPING CENTER.

THIS BRAND NEW TWO-STORY BUILDING WAS BUILT WITH STONE WALLS, AND INCLUDED A SPACIOUS GARDEN WHERE LARGE APPLE AND CHERRY BLOSSOM TREES WERE PLANTED.

THOSE WHO SAW IT WOULD IMMEDIATELY NOTICE ITS HOMEY AND CALMING ATMOSPHERE.

"THIS IS A FINE BUILDING."

"YES, ISN'T IT? WE EVEN HAVE EQUIPMENT THAT IS RARE FOR A RURAL TOWN LIKE US."

RIZA SAID THIS WITH A HINT OF PRIDE IN HER VOICE.

ALLEN NODDED HIS HEAD AS COMPLEX THOUGHTS CAME TO MIND.

*CREATING A HOSPITAL LIKE THIS AND MANAGING IT WOULD REQUIRE A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF MONEY. JUST HOW IS THE DOCTOR PLANNING TO RAISE THAT MONEY?*

WHEN THEY ENTERED THE HOSPITAL, RIZA TURNED TO HIM AND BOWED.

"THANK YOU FOR KEEPING ME COMPANY. I'LL BE GOING TO COUNSELING NOW."

"OKAY, I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE. TODAY WAS FUN."

"I THOUGHT SO TOO...THANK YOU FOR GOING OUT WITH ME."

ALLEN WATCHED RIZA OFF AS SHE HEADED TOWARDS THE RECEPTIONIST.

RIZA HAD LOOKED AS THOUGH SHE HAD BROKEN FREE FROM SOMETHING. HE GOT THE FEELING THAT HE WOULDN'T BE SEEING HER AT THE CEMETERY TONIGHT.

*AM I THINKING TOO OPTIMISTICALLY?*

"RIZA!"

ALLEN TURNED AROUND AS HE HEARD A VOICE ECHO THROUGH THE CORRIDORS.

WALKING HURRIEDLY TOWARDS HER, THE DOCTOR GRABBED FIRMLY ONTO RIZA'S ARM.

"I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. WE NEED TO TALK. COME THIS WAY!"

"O-OKAY..."

THE DOCTOR HALF-DRAGGED RIZA TO THE EXAMINING ROOM, IT WAS A FORCEFUL AND VIOLENT ATTITUDE, ONE THAT WASN'T APPROPRIATE FOR HIM TO DISPLAY TO A PATIENT.

*...I'M GETTING A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.*

LEAVING THE INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL, ALLEN WANDERED AROUND TO THE BACK OF THE BUILDING.

AFTER FINDING THE WINDOW OF THE ROOM THAT RIZA AND THE DOCTOR HAD ENTERED, ALLEN QUIETLY PEEPED INSIDE.

HE SAW RIZA SITTING DOWN ON A BED, LOOKING PERTURBED. THE DOCTOR WAS SITTING IN A CHAIR ACROSS FROM HER.

SO THAT THEY WOULDN'T NOTICE HIM, ALLEN OBSERVED THE SITUATION FROM BEHIND THE WINDOW SHADES.

HE COULD HEAR THE DOCTOR'S VOICE.

"RIZA...ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU DECIDED?"

RIZA LOOKED DOWN WITH A PENSIVE FROWN.

"DOCTOR...I REALLY DON'T KNOW..."

"WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE SAYING, RIZA? THIS IS THE BEST METHOD WE CAN USE TO HEAL YOUR HEART."

ALLEN RUBBED HIS EARS.

*THE BEST METHOD TO HEAL HER HEART? WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY THAT?*

"BUT, I..."

THE DOCTOR PLACED A HAND ON RIZA'S SHOULDER AS SHE HESITATED.

"THE TWO OF YOU WERE VERY MUCH IN LOVE BACK THEN. DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE HIM ONE MORE TIME?"

RIZA CHEWED ON HER LIPS.

THE DOCTOR BEGAN TO TAKE ON A MORE FEVERISHED TONE.

"YOU CAN SEE YOUR BELOVED AGAIN, YOU KNOW? DON'T YOU WANT TO HEAR HIS VOICE? OR TURN A SMILING FACE TO HIM? I'M SURE HE WANTS TO SEE YOU TOO!"

"HE WANTS TO...SEE ME..."

RIZA MURMURED IN A DAZE.

THE DOCTOR WILDLY NODDED HIS HEAD.

"YES! HE LOVED YOU VERY MUCH. HE REALLY WANTS TO SEE YOU AGAIN! WON'T YOU GRANT HIS WISH?"

*WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?*

ALLEN STARED AT THE DOCTOR.

*THIS IS COUNSELING?*

*IT APPEARS MY BAD PREMONITION WASN'T A FLUKE.*

THE CONSIDERATE WORDS AND GENTLE ATTITUDE HE HAD SHOWN AT THE CEMETERY MUST HAVE BEEN A PUBLIC APPEARANCE.

*WHAT IS THE DOCTOR TRYING TO GET RIZA TO DO?*

"EVERYTHING'S READY. YOU ONLY HAVE TO MAKE A RESERVATION THROUGH TELEPHONE, AND WHEN SOMEONE COMES TO HELP YOU CALL BACK HIS SOUL."

THE DOCTOR SPREAD HIS HAND WIDELY IN A GRAND GESTURE, AND SAID FERVENTLY.

"WILL YOU BELIEVE IN THIS MIRACLE? HE WILL BE BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE!"

*WHAT?*

ALLEN COULD HARDLY BELIEVE HIS EARS.

*HE SAID, 'HELP HER TO CALL BACK HIS SOUL'?*

*I SEE, SO THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT. SO, THE ONE HE WAS TALKING TO ON THE PHONE...*

RIZA'S SHOULDERS GRADUALLY SHOOK, AND AS THOUGH A FLOODGATE HAD OPENED, SHE BURST INTO TEARS.

"I WANT TO SEE HIM...I WANT TO SEE HIM SO MUCH, I COULD DIE..."

HER VOICE CONTAINED SO MUCH DISTRESS THAT ANYONE WHO HEARD IT WOULD HAVE FELT THEIR HEARTS TEAR APART WITH PITY.

ALLEN QUIETLY STROKED THE SCAR THAT RAN ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS CHEEK.

|I WANT TO SEE HIM. I WANT TO SEE MANA.|

HE REMEMBERED HIS OWN VOICE FROM THREE YEARS AGO.

ALLEN TIGHTLY CLENCHED HIS HAND INTO A FIST.

*BUT YOU CAN'T RIZA. BECAUSE...*

THE DOCTOR'S FACE IMMEDIATELY SHONE.

"I SEE! THEN, LET'S MAKE THE TELEPHONE CALL..."

"BUT..."

RIZA INTERRUPTED THE DOCTOR.

"I WANT TO SEE HIM...BUT, I DON'T NEED TO BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE..."

ALTHOUGH SHE SAID THIS IN A WEAK VOICE, SHE SAID IT IN A CLEAR, DEFINITIVE TONE.

AT THAT MOMENT, THE DOCTOR'S EXPRESSION CHANGED COMPLETELY.

HIS FACE FILLED WITH SUCH UNSPEAKABLE ANGER AND IRRITATION THAT HE SUDDENLY LOOKED LIKE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON. HIS COLD EYES GLARED FIXEDLY AT RIZA.

HAVING SHOWN HIS TRUE NATURE, THE DOCTOR PULLED OUT A CLOTH FROM HIS POCKET WITH NIMBLENESS YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT FROM HIS BULKY FORM, AND PRESSED IT AGAINST RIZA'S MOUTH.

"DOCTOR!?"

THE DOCTOR LOOKED DOWN AT RIZA WITH A COLD FACE AS SHE STRUGGLED IN SURPRISE.

"TENACIOUS LITTLE CRYBABY...I'M AT MY LIMIT! I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR CONSENT ANYMORE!"

THE CLOTH MUST HAVE BEEN SOAKED IN A DRUG BECAUSE RIZA'S EYES BEGAN TO GO BLANK.

"I'VE KEPT 'THAT PERSON' WAITING FOR A FAIRLY LONG TIME! I'LL MAKE YOU COOPERATE NO MATTER WHAT!"

RIZA'S EYES SLOWLY DROOPED SHUT.

STRENGTH ESCAPED FROM HER BODY, AND SHE COLLAPSED ONTO THE BED.

BREATHING ROUGHLY, THE DOCTOR GRABBED A TELEPHONE ON THE SIDE OF THE BED AND BEGAN TO MAKE A CALL.

"DAMMIT! THINGS WERE SO MUCH EASIER WITH SARA. YOU'VE MADE ME WASTE A LOT MUCH TIME!"

*THIS IS AS FAR AS IT GOES.*

ALLEN FLUNG OPEN THE WINDOW AND JUMPED INTO THE ROOM.

THE DOCTOR COULD ONLY STAND PETRIFIED IN ASTONISHMENT AT THE SUDDEN INTRUDER.

"MAKING A PHONE CALL TO THE MILLENNIUM EARL? DOCTOR."

"WHA..."

THE DOCTOR'S HAND FLEW INTO THE INSIDE POCKET OF HIS BUSINESS SUIT.

ALLEN KICKED OFF THE FLOOR.

THE MOMENT THE DOCTOR TOOK OUT THE HANDGUN, ALLEN HAD ALREADY SHORTENED THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM, AND GRABBED THE WRIST THAT HELD THE GUN.

AFTER HE EMPTIED THE DOCTOR'S LEFT HAND, ALLEN GRABBED AHOLD OF THE THE MAN'S NECK.

THE DOCTOR MADE A GURGLING SOUND IN HIS THROAT.

AS THE DOCTOR'S FACE TWITCHED, SWEAT BEGAN TO FLOW FROM THE TEMPLES OF HIS FOREHEAD.

WHEN ALLEN HAD TWISTED THE DOCTOR'S WRIST, THE GUN HAD QUICKLY FALLEN TO THE FLOOR. ALLEN KICKED THE HANDGUN UNDER THE BED.

"I'VE HEARD OF HUMANS LIKE YOU. IN EXCHANGE FOR A LARGE AMOUNT OF REWARD MONEY, YOU



PREPARE THE "INGREDIENTS" FOR AKUMA. YOU'RE COOPERATIVE WORKERS OF THE MILLENNIUM EARL..."

THE MILLENNIUM EARL -- HE TAMPERED WITH PEOPLE'S HEARTS, AND IN THE END, TURNED THEM INTO WEAPONS.

THE HAND WRAPPED AROUND THE DOCTOR'S NECK SQUEEZED HARDER AS POWER FILLED IT.

"YES. YOU'RE CALLED "BROKERS" AREN'T YOU?"

"W-WHO ARE YOU?"

THE DOCTOR WAS TREMBLING HORRIBLY.

"YOU KNOW THE MILLENNIUM EARL!? COULD YOU BE AN AKUMA? HIS MESSENGER!?"

ALLEN LOOKED AT THE DOCTOR COLDLY.

*IT APPEARS THAT THE DOCTOR DOESN'T REGARD ME AS THE ENEMY EXORCIST, BUT AS A MESSENGER OF THE MILLENNIUM EARL.*

WHEN ALLEN STAYED SILENT WITHOUT DENYING ANYTHING, THE DOCTOR BEGAN TO TALK FREELY.

"I-I KNOW IT'S MY FAULT FOR PASSING THE DEADLINE!! BUT THE MAN...HE JUST WOULDN'T DIE EASILY..."

*SINCE HE'S A DOCTOR, THE PROBABILITY OF HIM MEETING PEOPLE ON THEIR DEATHBEDS IS HIGH. SO HE MUST HAVE BEEN WATCHING LENNY, EVEN BEFORE HE HAD DIED.*

THE DOCTOR BECAME MORE DESPERATE AS ALLEN STOOD IN SILENCE.

"I WORKED HARD WITH THE GOOD "INGREDIENTS" THAT WERE HANDED OVER TO ME!! SO THAT THE WOMAN WOULDN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING, I SERVED HIM SOME POISON BIT BY BIT...SO I COULD SPEED UP HIS TIME OF DEATH..."

*DID HE JUST SAY, SPEED UP THE TIME OF HIS DEATH?!*

ALLEN COULD HARDLY BELIEVE HIS EARS.

"I PRODUCED THE BEST TRAGEDY! I THINK EVEN THE EARL WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THESE TWO!!"

*I FEEL HOT. I CAN FEEL THE ANGER IN MY HEART BOILING OVER ME.*

"IT WASN'T A TRAGEDY. SHE WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT HIS DEATH."

HE SPOKE IN A LOW VOICE THAT HE COULDN'T BELIEVE WAS HIS OWN.

"YOU WERE ONLY BEING AN INTERFERENCE WHILE SHE WAS TRYING TO HEAL HER HEART."

THE STRENGTH IN HIS HAND WOULDN'T LOOSEN. HIS FINGERS DUG CRUELLY INTO THE DOCTOR'S THROAT WITH A GRINDING SOUND, AND THE DOCTOR SCREAMED.

JUST THEN, THE DOOR WAS FORCEFULLY THROWN OPEN.

A SLENDER WOMAN WEARING A WHITE NURSE'S ROBE CAME INSIDE. LONG, CHESTNUT-COLORED HAIR -- IT WAS SARA, THE WOMAN HE HAD SEEN IN THE PHOTO.

"RELEASE YOUR HOLD ON HIM!"

SARA GLARED AT HIM.

ALLEN LOOKED AT SARA WITH PITY IN HIS EYES.

SHE WAS THE WOMAN WHO LOST HER LOVER IN AN ACCIDENT; THIS HORRIBLE SITUATION WAS THE REASON WHY SHE HADN'T BEEN COMING TO HER FAVORITE STORE LATELY.

*LOSING HER LOVER SO SUDDENLY...SHE MUST HAVE BEEN EASILY TAKEN IN BY HONEYED WORDS.*

"SO YOU ARE ALSO A VICTIM THAT THE DOCTOR...NO, THE EARL CREATED."

ALLEN GAZED AT "THE PITIFUL SOUL OF A MAN WHO HAD INVADED A CORPSE" IN FRONT OF HIM.

"WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?"

"MY LEFT EYE CAN SEE THE SOULS INVOLVED WITH AKUMA. IT'S A PROFITABLE ABILITY I USE TO COMPENSATE FOR HAVING TURNED MY IMPORTANT PERSON INTO AN AKUMA. YOU ARE...AN AKUMA WEARING SARA'S SKIN. YOUR NAME'S RICHARD-SAN, ISN'T IT, YOU'RE SARA'S DEAD LOVER?"

## "SILENCE!"

SARA'S FEATURES CHANGED.

THERE WAS A LOW-KEY GROANING NOISE AS SPIRALING WRINKLES APPEARED AROUND SARA'S EYES AND THEN RAPIDLY SPREAD TO THE REST OF HER FACE.

TEARS OF BLOOD FELL FROM HER BLUE EYES. PERHAPS BECAUSE SHE WAS ORIGINALLY A VERY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN,

THE TRANSFIGURATION SHE WAS UNDERGOING LOOKED CRUEL.

SARA'S BODY TREMBLED.

HOW MANY TIMES HAD HE SEEN THIS? THE MOMENT WHEN THE THE EVIL WEAPON -- THE AKUMA -- FLUNG AWAY ITS HUMAN SKIN.

A CLEAR TONE OF SHIFTING METAL RANG THROUGHOUT THE ROOM.

"RICHARD'S SOUL", HIS NECK TIED TO A CONNECTING CHAIN, WAS VISIBLE FOR ONE INSTANT...

AND THEN SARA'S BODY, NO, THE SKIN, BURST OPEN ALL AT ONCE. AS IF THEY HAD BEEN WAITING IMPATIENTLY, CORDS AND MACHINE PARTS THRUST OUT FROM INSIDE ONE AFTER ANOTHER, WRAPPING AROUND HER RAPIDLY CHANGING FORM.

A HORRIFYING SCENE, WHEN HUMAN AND MACHINE FUSE TOGETHER...

A CREATION OF TRAGEDY, THE EVIL WEAPON TWISTED ITSELF INTO A DISTORTED AND ENORMOUS BALL SHAPE.

IN THE CENTER OF THAT ARTIFICIAL FORM, ONE COULD BARELY BE MADE OUT A WOMAN'S FACE. THIS WAS THE ONLY PROOF THAT THE WEAPON WAS ORIGINALLY SARA.

THE AKUMA BOAST A HARD BODY THAT CANNOT BE DAMAGED BY GUNSHOTS. HUMANS CANNOT OPPOSE THEM THROUGH USUAL MEANS.

NOT ONLY DO THEY HAVE A HIGH DEFENSIVE POWER, BUT ALSO AN UNIMAGINABLE OFFENSE. THEY COULD PROJECT A GREAT NUMBER OF BULLETS FROM THE CYLINDRICAL CANNONS SPREAD ACROSS THEIR BODIES. STARTING NOW, THIS AKUMA WILL BEGIN TO FIRE THESE BULLETS.

FROM THEIR FIXED POSITION, SARA'S BLUE EYES GLARED IN HIS DIRECTION.

*IT'S COMING!*

THE MOMENT THE CANNON SPOUTED FIRE, ALLEN KICKED OFF THE FLOOR AND DANCED THROUGH THE AIR.

THE BULLETS OF THE AKUMA GRAZED HIS SKIN, MERCILESSLY TEARING APART THE FLOOR, THE WINDOWS, AND THE WALLS. IT WAS A TERRIBLY DESTRUCTIVE FORCE.

A BULLET THAT HAD PIERCED THROUGH THE WINDOW HIT A TREE IN THE YARD.

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE PENTACLES BEGAN TO RISE ON THE SURFACE OF THE TREE'S TRUNK. THIS WAS THE PROOF THAT THE VIRUS IN THE AKUMA'S BLOOD WAS INVADING IT.

AND THEN, THE SPLENDID TREE WITH ITS LUXURIOUSLY SPROUTING LEAVES, SMASHED INTO MANY PIECES AS IF IT WERE MADE OF GLASS.

THE AKUMA'S POISON DESTROYS ALL LIVING THINGS...

ALLEN SUDDENLY HEARD THE DOCTOR'S SCREAMS.

TRYING TO CURL HIS LARGE FRAME INTO A BALL, THE DOCTOR SHIVERED IN A CORNER OF THE ROOM.

THE DEVIL'S LUCK MUST HAVE BEEN ON HIS SIDE, BECAUSE NONE OF THE BULLETS HAD HIT HIM.

THE AKUMA SHOT OUT BULLETS ONCE AGAIN.

AVOIDING THE RAIN OF BULLETS, ALLEN WHIRLED AROUND ONCE AND LANDED ON TOP OF THE BED.

RIZA WAS STILL SLEEPING. *IF SHE STAYS HERE, SHE'LL GET HIT!*

*I'LL SETTLE THIS IN ONE STRIKE!*

ALLEN LIFTED HIS LEFT ARM TO HIS CHEST.

*ANTI-AKUMA WEAPON, INVOCATE!*

"CROSS THAT DWELLS WITHIN ME. GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO DESTROY THIS AKUMA."

THE CROSS EMBEDDED IN THE BACK OF HIS LEFT HAND SENT OUT A DAZZLING LIGHT. SHIFTING ITSELF INTO LIGHTNING, THE LIGHT RAN ALONG HIS UPPER ARM.

IN THE NEXT INSTANT, ALLEN'S LEFT ARM TURNED STIFF, AS IF IT HAD BECOME COVERED IN ARMOR. IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, HIS ARM GREW AS LONG AS HIS BODY, AND HIS FINGERS TURNED POINTY, LIKE A RAPTOR'S CLAW.

A WEAPON OF GOD THAT EXISTS TO DESTROY THE AKUMA -- THAT IS WHAT HIS LEFT HAND WAS.

ALLEN GAZED INTENTLY AT SARA, THE WOMAN WHO HAD TURNED INTO AN EVIL WEAPON.

"YOU LOVED YOUR DEAD LOVER SO MUCH, YOU COULDN'T ENDURE THE PAIN. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, BUT YOU WERE WRONG. YOU ACCEPTED HELP FROM SOMEONE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE."

*THE SAME AS I DID THREE YEARS AGO.*

*IT'S A TRAGEDY THAT CANNOT BE UNDONE.*

CONTROLLED BY THE EARL, THEY COULD NO LONGER LIVE AS ANYTHING ELSE OTHER THAN A WEAPON.

ALLEN QUIETLY SHUT HIS EYES.

*THIS IS THE ONLY THING I CAN DO.*

*SAVE PITIFUL SOULS.*

"RICHARD, SARA, I'LL FREE YOU NOW."

ALLEN LIFTED HIS NOW LARGE LEFT ARM.

*IT WON'T BE PAINFUL. I'LL DEFEAT YOU IN ONE BLOW.*

ALLEN JUMPED HIGH, AND SWUNG DOWN HIS LEFT ARM LIKE AN AXE.

HIS LEFT HAND BROKE THROUGH THE AKUMA'S BODY.

SARA'S FACE, SET IN THE CENTER, OPENED ITS EYES WIDE AS IF IN SURPRISE.

"REST IN PEACE THIS TIME..."

GATHERING POWER INTO HIS LEFT HAND, ALLEN THOROUGHLY TORE HER IN HALF.

JUST WHEN HE THOUGHT THE AKUMA'S BODY WOULD SPLIT INTO TWO PARTS, RICHARD'S SOUL, WHICH HAD BEEN TRAPPED INSIDE, JUMPED OUT.

THE CHAIN THAT WAS BOUND AROUND HIS NECK BROKE INTO TINY PIECES...

RICHARD SHOWED AN EXPRESSION OF PEACE FOR A MOMENT BEFORE HE DISAPPEARED.

IN THE NEXT INSTANT, THE AKUMA'S BODY EXPLODED.

THE DEMONIC-TYPE BODY APPEARED, ONLY TO SLOWLY BURN AWAY.

*GOOD NIGHT, SARA. GOOD NIGHT, RICHARD.*

ALLEN GAZED AT HIS LEFT HAND.

**"U-UWAAAAAAH! A MONSTER!!"**

FINALLY OVERCOMING HIS TEMPORARY BOUT OF PARALYSIS, THE DOCTOR WAS HASTILY FUMBLING TOWARDS THE DOOR.

ALLEN DIDN'T MOVE. NO, HE **COULDN'T** MOVE.

THE DOCTOR WAS THE MAN WHO HAD CREATED THIS TRAGEDY; HE TURNED SARA INTO AN AKUMA, AND HAD EVEN WANTED TO GIVE UP RIZA AS A TRIBUTE TO THE MILLENNIUM EARL.

*I CAN'T FORGIVE HIM. IF I COULD...*

HIS LEFT HAND TWITCHED AS IT TRIED TO LIFT ITSELF UP. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF IT WERE RESPONDING TO HIS FEELINGS.

*CONTROL YOURSELF. **CONTROL** YOURSELF...*

ALLEN DESPERATELY TRIED TO CALM HIS THUNDERING HEART AS HE RELEASED THE INVOCATION ON HIS HAND.

*THE DOCTOR IS HUMAN. MY HAND ISN'T USED TO KILL HUMANS. IT'S USED TO*

*DESTROY THE AKUMA...*

JUST AS THE DOCTOR TOUCHED THE KNOB, THE DOOR FLEW OPEN ON THE OTHER SIDE.

"YOU SHAMELESS MAN!!"

MOTHER'S FIST EXPLODED INTO THE DOCTOR'S FACE.

ALLEN STARED DUMBFOUNDED AS THE DOCTOR WAS BLOWN OFF HIS FEET.

A MAN THE SIZE OF A BEER BARREL WAS BEING KNOCKED OFF HIS FEET BY A SHORT OLD WOMAN. IF HE HADN'T SEEN IT WITH HIS OWN EYES, HE WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE.

"TO THINK THAT YOU WERE A BROKER! I'M GOING TO BEAT THAT ROTTEN NATURE OF YOURS BACK INTO SHAPE!"

MOTHER SEIZED THE NAPE OF THE DOCTOR'S NECK; HE HAD A BLOODY NOSE AND FAINTED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

"U-UM, MOTHER, WHY ARE YOU HERE?"

"YOU WERE LATE COMING BACK, SO I GOT WORRIED AND CAME HERE LOOKING FOR YOU. THEN I SAW THIS FIASCO..."

MOTHER HELD HER HAND OUT TOWARDS ALLEN. A FOLDED-UP MEMO WAS HELD BETWEEN HER FINGERS.

"HERE. IT HAS THE LOCATION TO HQ WRITTEN ON IT."

ALLEN TOOK THE MEMO FROM MOTHER.

"GEEZ, WHAT DISGUSTING TIMES THESE ARE."

MOTHER GOT A FARAWAY LOOK IN HER EYES.

"...I NEVER THOUGHT SARA WOULD TURN OUT TO BE LIKE THIS. AND FURTHERMORE, HE WAS EVEN AFTER RIZA...IT'S A GOOD THING THAT YOU CAME. LEAVE THE REST TO ME. I'LL MAKE SURE THAT HE ATONES FOR HIS SINS AFTER I'M DONE WITH HIM."

MOTHER GAVE ALLEN A SHARP LOOK.

"WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO LET HIM GO?"

ALLEN COULDN'T ENDURE HER GAZE AND TURNED HIS FACE AWAY.

"BECAUSE HE WAS HUMAN? YOU'RE SO NAIVE...THAT SOFTNESS OF YOURS IS GOING TO PUT YOU IN A DILEMMA ONE OF THESE DAYS...I THOUGHT YOU SAID THAT YOU WERE PREPARED?"

ALLEN LOOKED AT HIS FEET WITHOUT SAYING A SINGLE WORD.

"YOUR ENEMIES WON'T JUST BE THE MILLENNIUM EARL AND THE AKUMA. THERE WILL ALSO BE A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF HUMANS, LIKE THIS BROKER, WHO WILL SIDE WITH THE EARL. SOME OF THEM MIGHT NOT DO IT FOR MONEY, LIKE THIS DOCTOR. THERE MIGHT BE THOSE WHO ACTIVELY WANT TO ANNIHILATE HUMANS, OR THOSE WHO THINK THEY SHOULD DESTROY THIS WORLD. WHEN YOU CONFRONT THOSE KINDS OF PEOPLE, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?"

ALLEN CHEWED HIS LIP.

*AS AN EXORCIST, I'M PREPARED TO FIGHT WITH THE AKUMA.*

*BUT, WOULD I BE ABLE TO KILL HUMANS?*

*EVEN IF MY LIFE WAS IN DANGER, I CAN'T CLEARLY SAY WHETHER OR NOT I'LL BE ABLE TO KILL ANOTHER HUMAN BEING...*

"I'M SORRY..."

"YOU STUPID IDIOT!!"

ALLEN FLEW BACKWARDS AS HIS FACE WAS THOROUGHLY PUNCHED IN. AT FIRST, HE THOUGHT HE WAS HIT WITH A HAMMER OR SOMETHING, BUT IT WAS ONLY MOTHER GRASPING HER FIST TIGHTLY. SHE REALLY HELD UNBELIEVABLE POWER FOR AN OLD WOMAN.

"YOU'RE STILL **COMPLETELY** WEAK!! I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO BECOME AN **EXORCIST**! YOU THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO OVERCOME THE MILLENNIUM EARL IN A STRUGGLE TO THE DEATH THE WAY YOU ARE RIGHT NOW!?"

ALLEN RUBBED HIS BRUISED CHEEK, LOOKING AT MOTHER IN SURPRISE.

"IF YOU CAN'T TREAT YOURSELF MORE VALUABLY, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO TREAT OTHERS THE SAME WAY! DO YOU WANT TO BE AN EXORCIST JUST SO YOU CAN "DESTROY" THE AKUMA!?"

ALLEN LOOKED AT HIS FEET; HE HAD NO WORDS TO RESPOND WITH.

THE SILENCE CONTINUED. THEN...

"GAIN TRUE STRENGTH LIKE RIZA, AND BECOME AN EXORCIST."

SURPRISED BY THE SAINTLY VOICE FULL OF MOTHERLY AFFECTION, ALLEN RAISED HIS HEAD. MOTHER LOOKED AT HIM, WEARING HER

USUAL IRRITATED FACE.

SHE WAS A DEVIL BENEATH TEMPLE GUARDIAN DEITIES...BUT SHE REGARDED HIM IMPORTANTLY.

SOMETHING WARM POURED IN HIS HEART.

*I WILL CONTINUE TO DO MY BEST. SO THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE LIKE HER STILL AROUND.*

"YES...YOU'RE RIGHT. RIZA IS TRULY STRONG."

ALLEN SOFTLY TOUCHED THE BUTTON ON HIS SLEEVE.

HE SLOWLY APPROACHED THE BED, AND GAZED AT RIZA'S SLEEPING FACE.

RIZA WAS GENTLY BREATHING AS SHE SLEPT. FROM THE CORNER OF HER RIGHT EYE SPILLED A TRICKLE OF TEARS.

ALLEN GENTLY WIPED THEM AWAY WITH HIS THUMB.

*

THE RINGS OF MANY TELEPHONES RESOUNDED THROUGHOUT A WIDE ROOM, A CACOPHONY OF NOISE.

SURROUNDED BY THIS HIGH PILE OF TELEPHONES WAS THE MILLENNIUM EARL.

HE GRABBED THE CLOSEST PHONE.

"HELLO~? ♥"

HOWEVER, NO SOUND COULD BE HEARD ON THE OTHER LINE.

"CHE, WHAT ARE YOU CALLING FOR? MY CONTRACT IS FINISHED WITH YOU! ♥"

THE EARL EASILY SET THE TELEPHONE ASIDE.

"I HAVE PLENTY OF OTHER BROKERS ♥"

THE EARL GRABBED ONE OF THE TELEPHONES THAT RANG LIKE A NEVERENDING SCREECH.

"HELLO, THIS IS THE EARL~~~♥ EH, YOU'VE GOTTEN A GOOD ONE?♥"

THE EARL GLANCED AT THE WALL.

ARRANGED IN A ROW THERE WERE MANY DEMONIC-TYPE BODIES. SOME OF THEM HAD A PAPER STUCK ON THEM WITH THE WORDS "RESERVED".

A SATISFIED SMILE APPEARED ON HIS FACE.

LIKE A LOUD CHORUS, THE TELEPHONES CONTINUED TO RING.

THE SOUND OF THIS MULTITUDE OF RINGING WILL ONLY STOP WHEN EITHER MANKIND, OR THE EARL, IS DESTROYED.

THE MAKER OF AKUMA: THE MILLENNIUM EARL. THE APOSTLES OF GOD: THE EXORCISTS.

WITH THE FATE OF THE WORLD WAGERED BETWEEN THE TWO, THE FIGHT HAS ALREADY BEGUN...

The Clergyman of the Journey - Part 3/3

D.Gray-man 1

# To be continued...

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See you on next issue!